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## **The rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony between 1921 and 1933.**

Szejnmann, Claus-Christian W

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# **'The Rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony between 1921 and 1933'**

by

**Claus-Christian Werner Szejnmann**

**A thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

November 1994

King's College London, London University



## **Abstract**

The dissertation is divided into two parts of equal length. The first part provides a chronological survey of the development of the NSDAP during the Weimar era. The framework of the investigation covers the slow spread of the movement in the 1920s, the breakthrough of the NSDAP between 1929 and 1930, its subsequent development as mass party and the Nazis' seizure of power in March 1933. Central aspects of the discussion are the origins of the Nazi activists, their unifying experiences, the development of the NSDAP's organisation, strategy and propaganda, its special features and limitations, the Nazis' relation with other groups in society, and finally, sociological, political and economic features of Saxon society.

The second part of the dissertation consists of three equally long thematic chapters which look at the rise of the Saxon NSDAP from different angles. All chapters deal with the divisions, contradictions and problems which Saxon society was facing because of the process of modernization and how this produced opportunities and limits for the Nazis. The discussion about the rise of the Nazis in the working-class milieu of Saxony shows how the NSDAP's ability to attract working-class support depended on how successfully the SPD and KPD warded off Nazi infiltration in their traditional constituencies. The chapter about the rise of the Nazis in the nationalist milieu investigates the nationalist and right-wing bourgeois culture - i.e. its clubs, organisations, celebrations, press and parties - its relationship with the Nazi movement, and its increasing shift towards the right in the final years of the Republic. Lastly, the chapter about the economic crisis and the effects of the Nazis' propaganda machine in the Saxon district of Schwarzenberg - a Nazi stronghold - exemplifies the importance of propaganda for the NSDAP's electoral success and looks at the importance of economic misery for driving the masses into the NSDAP.

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The map displays the following districts and cities:

- Leipzig:** LEIPZIG, WARTENBURG
- Grimma:** AH. LEIPZIG, AH. GRIMMA
- Borna:** AH. BORNA
- Oschätz:** AH. OSCHATZ, RIESSA
- Großenhain:** AH. GROßENHAIN, AH. KAMENZ
- Bautzen:** AH. BAUTZEN, BOUTZEN
- Löbau:** AH. LÖBAU
- Zittau:** AH. ZITTAU
- Pirna:** AH. PIRNA, PIRNA
- Dresden:** DRESDEN, DRESDEN
- Meißen:** AH. MEIßEN, MEIßEN
- Freiberg:** FREIBERG, FREIBERG, FREITAL
- Chemnitz:** CHEMNITZ, CHEMNITZ, AH. FLÖHA
- Stollberg:** STOLLBERG
- Mariberg:** AH. MARIBERG
- Annaberg:** AH. ANNABERG
- Schwarzenberg:** AH. SCHWARZENBERG
- Plauen:** PLAUEN
- Oelsnitz:** AH. OELSCHNITZ
- Chemnitz:** CHEMNITZ, CHEMNITZ
- Stollberg:** STOLLBERG
- Mariberg:** AH. MARIBERG
- Annaberg:** AH. ANNABERG
- Schwarzenberg:** AH. SCHWARZENBERG
- Plauen:** PLAUEN
- Oelsnitz:** AH. OELSCHNITZ

**Legend:**

- hatched: Amtshauptmannschaft
- vertical lines: Erzgebirge
- diagonal lines: Vogtland

**Scale:** 50 km

**Inset Map:** Shows Saxony's location within Germany.

The map displays the following districts and cities:

- Leipzig:** LEIPZIG, WARTENBURG
- Grimma:** AH. LEIPZIG, AH. GRIMMA
- Borna:** AH. BORNA
- Oschätz:** AH. OSCHATZ, RIESSA
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- Bautzen:** AH. BAUTZEN, BOUTZEN
- Löbau:** AH. LÖBAU
- Zittau:** AH. ZITTAU
- Pirna:** AH. PIRNA, PIRNA
- Dresden:** DRESDEN, DRESDEN
- Meißen:** AH. MEIßEN, MEIßEN
- Freiberg:** FREIBERG, FREIBERG, FREITAL
- Chemnitz:** CHEMNITZ, CHEMNITZ, AH. FLÖHA
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**Scale:** 50 km

**Inset Map:** Shows Saxony's location within Germany.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**



(i) Current research and the main concerns of this dissertation

The amount of literature on the Weimar Republic - especially its final years - is mountainous. Generations of historians have tried to explain how the collapse of the Republic and Hitler's rise to power was possible.<sup>1</sup> This dissertation investigates the rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony between 1921 and 1933. "Another local study about the NSDAP?", one might wearily ask, after enormous quantities of similar studies seem to have established how the Nazis managed to become a mass movement in nearly every region, town and even tiny village in Germany.<sup>2</sup> However, there are several important reasons for this project.

First, as a recent conference about the Nazi Party at the local level showed: "Our knowledge about the NSDAP at the local level is still very limited ... there is a need for a new approach in the field. Most traditional studies concentrated too much on the NSDAP while they neglected the society in which the Nazis were able to thrive, i.e. they included too little social history."<sup>3</sup> This study looks at both, the

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<sup>1</sup> See especially K. D. Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik* (1984, fünfte Auflage, zweiter Nachdruck, Düsseldorf); E. Kolb, *The Weimar Republic* (London, 1988); D. J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt, 1987); H. Mommsen, *Die Verpielte Freiheit. Der Weg der Republik von Weimar in den Untergang 1918 bis 1933* (Frankfurt, Berlin, 1990); H. A. Winkler, *Weimar 1918-1933. Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen Demokratie* (München, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> The best ones are J. Noakes, *The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony 1921-1933* (London, 1971); W. S. Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power* (2nd ed., London, 1984); G. Pridham, *Hitler's Rise to Power. The Nazi Movement in Bavaria* (London, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> C.-C. W. Szejnmann, 'Conference Report. Nationalsozialismus und Region. An International Symposium organized by the Institut für Bayerische Geschichte and the Institut für Zeitgeschichte from 26 to 28 October 1993 in the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich', *German History*, 12 (3) (1994), p. 398. Recent admirable exceptions are K. Tenfelde, *Proletarische Provinz. Radikalisierung und Widerstand in Penzberg/Oberbayern 1900-1945* (München, 1982); R. Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism. Marburg, 1880-1935* (Chapel Hill, London, 1986); C. Rauh-Kühne, *Katholisches Milieu und Kleinstadtgesellschaft. Ettlingen 1918-1939* (Sigmaringen, 1991).

local Nazi movement and Saxon society, in order to explain the rise of the Nazi Party in the state.

Furthermore, little research has been conducted on the Nazi Party in Saxony. There exists only two publications about the NSDAP in Saxony between 1919 and 1945. The former East German historians Werner Bramke covers in less than twelve pages 'Saxony under the fascist dictatorship between 1933 until 1939'<sup>4</sup>, and Josef Reinhold investigates in eight pages the role the local Nazis played in the elections to the agricultural chamber in Saxony in 1931<sup>5</sup>. Two diploma works cover additional ground.<sup>6</sup> This is unsatisfactory as Saxony was not only the Nazi *Gau* with by far the highest population and most NSDAP members of all *Gaue*, but also one of the earliest strongholds of the movement and crucial for the rise of the party on the *Reich* level in 1930. Additionally, the southwestern part of the state remained one of the greatest NSDAP bastions until the Nazi 'seizure of power'.

As Marxist historians largely omitted the phenomenon of National Socialism, hardly any local studies exist about this aspect in the region that was formerly East Germany.<sup>7</sup> More generally, little

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<sup>4</sup> W. Bramke, 'Vom Freistaat zum Gau. Sachsen unter der faschistischen Diktatur 1933 bis 1939', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 31 (1983), pp. 1067-1078.

<sup>5</sup> J. Reinhold, 'Die NSDAP und die Wahl zur Landwirtschaftskammer 1931 im Freistaat Sachsen', *Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 9 (3) (1990), pp. 188-196.

<sup>6</sup> H. Stoschek, 'Die Entwicklung der militaristisch-faschistischen Bewegung in Sachsen in den Jahren 1919 bis 1925 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der NSDAP' (Diplomarbeit Potsdam, 1967); T. Mai, 'Der faschistische sächsische Gauleiter Martin Mutschmann, die Entwicklung des Gaues Sachsen und der NSDAP' (Diplomarbeit Jena, 1984). Both works were written from a dogmatic Marxist viewpoint.

<sup>7</sup> J. H. Grill, 'Local and Regional Studies on National Socialism: A Review', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 21 (2) (1986), p. 264. Recently, however, see K. Urbschat 'Mecklenburg-Schwerin in den letzten Jahren der Weimarer Republik', in F. Bajohr (Hrsg.), *Norddeutschland im Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg, 1993), pp. 83-98; U. Schröder 'Zur Entwicklung der Hitlerbewegung in Pommern (1922-1929)', *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands*, 41 (1993), pp. 197-216.

research of the region exists so far by western historians<sup>8</sup>, who faced great problems of access to archival sources in the former GDR<sup>9</sup>, until the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 made unrestricted research possible.

Lastly, no decent general surveys or specific accounts of Saxony exist during the Weimar Republic and especially during the time of the world economic crisis.<sup>10</sup> This is unsatisfying as Saxony was an important state in the *Reich* and some unique features make it a particularly interesting province to study. It was the most industrialised and urbanised province in Germany and was hit harder by the economic depression than any other region.

A political and economic survey of Saxony at the end of the introductory chapter gives a background of Saxony's development during the Weimar era. The dissertation itself is divided into two parts of equal length. The first part provides a chronological survey of the development of the NSDAP during the Weimar era. The framework of the investigation covers the slow spread of the movement in the 1920s, the breakthrough of the NSDAP between 1929 and 1930, its subsequent development as mass party and the Nazis' seizure of power in March 1933. Central aspects of the discussion are the origins of the Nazi activists, their unifying experiences, the development of the NSDAP's organisation, strategy and propaganda, its special features and limitations, the Nazis'

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<sup>8</sup> Exceptions are D. R. Tracey, 'The Development of the National Socialist Party in Thuringia, 1924-1930', *Central European History*, 8 (1) (1975), pp. 23-50; and R. Bessel, *Political Violence and the rise of Nazism. The Storm Troopers in Eastern Germany 1925-1934* (New Haven, London, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship* (London, 1985), p. 149.

<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately the useful contemporary study by Fabian does not cover the final years of the Republic. See W. Fabian, *Klassenkampf um Sachsen. Ein Stück Geschichte 1918-1930* (Löbau, 1930).

relation with other groups in society, and finally, sociological, political and economic features of Saxon society.

The second part of the dissertation consists of three equally long thematic chapters which look at the rise of the Saxon NSDAP from different angles. All chapters deal with the divisions, contradictions and problems which Saxon society was facing because of the process of modernization and how this produced opportunities and constraints for the Nazis.

The first two chapters about the 'working-class' milieu and 'nationalist' milieu of Saxony embark on a new approach in trying to understand the course of recent German history. Since the mid 1980s a group of historians have concentrated on looking at the extreme division of German society into different groups, classes, surroundings, and traditions.<sup>11</sup> They put emphasis on the divisions in German society in trying to explain the collapse of democracy and the rise of the Nazis in Weimar Germany. Economic problems, strains due to a process of modernization and tensions of identification, intensified these divisions during the 1920s. When the Great Depression was showing its disastrous effects, there developed a great desire among large segments of the population to finally overcome these divisions and to form a unified nation which was able to overcome the massive problems, in finding a way out and creating a new beginning. The Nazis offered this vision.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See especially D. Lehnert and K. Mengerle (Hrsg.), *Politische Identität und nationale Gedenktage. Zur politischen Kultur in der Weimarer Republik* (Opladen, 1989); *ibid.*, *Politische Teilkulturen zwischen Integration und Polarisierung. Zur politischen Kultur in der Weimarer Republik* (Opladen, 1990); Kühne, *Ettlingen*; see also W. L. Guttsman, *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany. Between Tradition and Commitment* (Oxford, 1990); L. E. Jones and J. Retallack (eds.), *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany. New Perspectives* (Washington, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Lehnert/Mengerle, *Gedenktage*, pp. 9-22.

The two chapters investigate the socialist/democratic and nationalist/authoritarian milieus which were facing each other with increasing bitterness and hatred. The discussion about the rise of the Nazis in the working-class milieu of Saxony looks at the NSDAP's ability to become a mass party in an area with an exceptionally large industrial working-class. The chapter about the rise of the Nazis in the nationalist milieu investigates the nationalist and right-wing bourgeois culture - i.e. its clubs, organisations, celebrations, press and parties - its relationship with the Nazi movement, and its increasing shift to the right in the final years of the Republic.

Finally, the last chapter looks at the role of the economic crisis and Nazi propaganda in the rise of the Saxon Nazi movement. There are still enormous gaps in our knowledge about Nazi propaganda and its significance for explaining Nazi success at the polling stations. Although the Great Depression from the late 1920s onwards had probably the greatest negative impact of all those problems facing German citizens at the time, no local survey on the Nazi Party looks at this aspect in any depth. Saxony provides the perfect requirements for such an investigation as it was hit harder by the world economic depression than any other region in Germany.

Throughout this investigation we draw comparisons with the simultaneous development of Nazi movements in other regions in Germany; this is done to understand both the similarities and the peculiarities of the Nazi movement in Saxony with other areas. Was it more 'left' or 'socialist' in its appeal and practice than elsewhere? How did the Nazis adapt to the background of a traditional working-class milieu? What were the distinctive features of Saxon

Nazis? To what extent did their background, ideas and methods compare against their party colleagues in other regions?

(ii) Political survey of Saxony during the Weimar Republic

Located in the middle-eastern corner of Germany, Saxony was the fifth largest German province. Its landscape is flat and plain in the north, and hilly with some deep valleys in the south, where it borders Czechoslovakia. Its capital Dresden, with 619,157 inhabitants, was the seat of parliament and administration. The other sizeable cities included Leipzig, the largest with 679,159 inhabitants, Chemnitz (333,851), Plauen (111,436), Zwickau (80,358), and Bautzen (40,335). Saxony was divided into five administrative regions, the *Kreishauptmannschaften* (KH)<sup>13</sup> (see the map in Appendix 1). Each KH itself was further divided into smaller units: twenty-eight *Amtshauptmannschaften* (AH) and twenty-one free towns. The creation of the federal Weimar Republic and Saxony's constitution in November 1920 ensured the status of *Freistaat* (free state) with powers over police, education, religion and internal administration.<sup>14</sup>

Saxony underwent a similarly uneasy political development as the rest of the Republic. First, there was the dominance of the Social Democrats, the introduction of reforms, and the hope of many for a better future. However, disappointment with the realities of the new Republic quickly set in, the resurgence of the right took place, and reforms were replaced with more conservative legislation. And

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<sup>13</sup> KH Bautzen (461,115 inhabitants), KH Chemnitz (976,079), KH Dresden (1,393,026), KH Leipzig (1,307,312), KH Zwickau (854,784). The KHs Dresden and Bautzen merged to one KH at the end of the Weimar era.

<sup>14</sup> The Republic kept the powers over foreign affairs, jurisprudence, post, finances and the military.

finally, the conjuncture of many crises from the late 1920 onwards led to an ever increasing polarization of the political parties and to a political stalemate, which crippled the work of the state parliament. The rapid rise of the local Nazis, who seemed to promise an alternative to the seemingly exhausted political system, took place against this background. However, in the political as well as economic sphere, Saxony's difficulties seemed more extreme and critical in many respects than on the national level.

The most typical feature of Saxony politically during the Weimar Republic was the strong tensions between the organised working-class movement on the left and the bourgeois-conservative groups on the right. The polarization was enhanced by the lack of a moderating middle in the political spectrum. The Centre Party, which played such a decisive role in the political middle in other provincial parliaments, was only a negligible force in Saxon politics.<sup>15</sup>

It is possible to divide the political development in Saxony into three distinct phases during the Weimar Republic. The first was dominated by the SPD and lasted from the end of 1918 until October 1923. After the SPD lost its absolute majority in the state parliament in November 1920, its minority government was tolerated by the KPD until the end of 1923. This enabled the SPD to introduce a major programme of progressive social and legislative reform,<sup>16</sup> which caused enormous resentment amongst those on the

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<sup>15</sup> The Centre Party was only able to win one single seat in the state parliament during the Weimar Republic (November 1920). The main reason for this was, that only 3.6 per cent of the Saxon's were Catholic and 90 per cent of the population were Protestants (*StJbSa*, (1924/1926), pp. 48-49).

<sup>16</sup> There were the introduction of the eight-hour working day and unemployment benefit, and the passing of a written constitution. Important reforms took place in the municipal code, education, abortion, and an

middle and right. Additionally, the left wing of the SPD gained more and more influence in the cabinet during these years.<sup>17</sup> Erich Zeigner, a left-wing Social Democrat, became Prime Minister in April 1923, and between the 10 and 29 October the KPD joined a coalition government with the SPD. This coalition abruptly came to an end when the *Reichswehr* followed orders from Berlin and removed the government from office on 29 October 1923.<sup>18</sup>

The second phase was dominated by coalition governments stretching from right-wing Social Democrats to members of the DVP, and at the end also the DNVP. From early 1924 until mid-1930, the governments in Dresden increasingly drifted to the right and replaced most reforms which had been introduced by the SPD piece by piece with conservative legislation. Although the parties on the left - SPD and KPD - together never received less than 46.6 per cent of the vote in the three provincial elections after 1922, they were not involved in the decision-making process in Dresden until the end of the Weimar era. Moreover, after the SPD-KPD coalition government had been brought to collapse by force in November 1923, an increasingly hostile relationship developed between both Marxist parties.

The third phase saw the breakdown of effective parliamentary government in Saxony. The polarization of the parliament had created a deadlock between left and right and parliamentary and

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attempt was made to democratise the civil service and to encourage a more progressive looking judiciary (Fabian, *Klassenkampf*, chaps. 4-6).

<sup>17</sup> Saxony was the greatest stronghold of the USPD. After the USPD re-merged with the SPD in September 1922, Saxony became the most important centre of the left-wing within the party.

<sup>18</sup> For the *Reichsexekution* against Saxony see D. B. Pryce, 'The Reich Government versus Saxony, 1923: The Decision to Intervene', *Central European History*, 10 (2) (1977), pp. 112-147; H. A. Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1918 bis 1924* (Berlin/Bonn, 1985), pp. 655-660, 665-669.



anti-parliamentary parties, with none of the groups able to push through their ideas. Out of this stalemate emerged a 'neutral cabinet' of civil servants (*Beamtenkabinett*) and lasted from May 1930 until March 1933.

The NSDAP participated for the first time in provincial elections in Saxony in October 1926. Hellmuth von Mücke and Fritz Tittmann gained parliamentary seats for the Nazis. Both handed in white ballot papers and made possible the re-election of Max Heldt as Prime Minister by all the bourgeois parties on 11 January 1927. Minutes after the election of Heldt, however, Tittmann already made clear that their future support for Heldt was dependent "on the attitude and actions of the new government."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Mücke attacked Heldt's government statement nine days later and summarized it as a "compilation of empty phrases, from which one can only conclude that decisive steps for the *Volk* are not going to be taken."<sup>20</sup> However, both Nazis were not prepared to join a SPD-KPD motion of no-confidence.<sup>21</sup> This was the pattern of most of the Nazi activities in and outside Saxony's parliament. Verbally, they vehemently attacked the existing government in Dresden. In practice, however, between late 1926 and early 1930 the Saxon Nazis did little to obstruct the government with concrete parliamentary action and directed most of their attacks against the Marxist parties.

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<sup>19</sup> *Verhandlungen des Sächsischen Landtages (VdSL)*, 3. Wahlperiode (Wp), 7. Sitzung, 11.1.1927, p. 143. It is not true, that the Nazis voted for Heldt (see Autorenkollektiv (W. Bramke and K. Kinner and H. Arndt and H.-J. Friederici), *In der Revolution geboren. In den Klassenkämpfen bewährt. Geschichte der KPD-Bezirksorganisation Leipzig-West Sachsen* (Leipzig, 1986), p. 161).

<sup>20</sup> *VdSL*, 3. Wp, 9. Sitzung, 20.1.1927, p. 169.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* On April 1928 and 19 February 1929 the two NSDAP members of Parliament also voted against a vote of no-confidence (*VdSL*, 3. Wp, 76. Sitzung, 19.4.1928, pp. 2736-2737; and *ibid.*, 106. Sitzung, 19.2.1929, p. 3955).

The limited influence the Nazis were able to exert after the 1926 elections was transformed to a decisive one after the May 1929 state elections, when the NSDAP won five mandates and held the key position in Saxony's parliament by tolerating a DVP, DNVP, WP and ASPD cabinet under Wilhelm Bunger. For the first time since 1920 the bourgeois parties held a majority again. The Nazis were quick to exploit their position. They put increasing pressure on the new government and constantly threatened to bring it down when their demands were not met. In summer 1930, the Nazis thought the time was ripe. They had been able to expand their support noticeably from mid-1929 onwards and were eager to translate the progress of the movement into more parliamentary seats. On 20 May 1930, they supported one of the many motions of no-confidence of the Marxist parties - this time it came from the SPD - and helped bring down the government.

The calculation paid off. The Nazis achieved their greatest electoral breakthrough in an important German province by scoring 14.4 per cent of the vote in the state elections in Saxony in June 1930. The Munich headquarters had concentrated its efforts for several months on Saxony. The complete Nazi leadership had participated in an enormous election campaign to achieve this success. However, the Nazi strategy to create a central German block of National Socialist domination together with neighbouring Thuringia, where Wilhelm Frick had become Minister of the Interior in January 1930, did not pay off. The Nazis failed to obtain the post of the Minister of the Interior. All their attempts at negotiating the post for Gregor Strasser failed due to the resistance of the DDP and VNR. As no successor to Wilhelm Schieck, a member of the DVP, was found after the elections (he had become Prime Minister twelve

days before the government had been brought down in May), his 'cabinet of 'civil servants' continued to govern Saxony until its dissolution by the Nazis in March 1933.

Earlier and more openly than in most regions in Germany, genuine parliamentary democracy came to an end in Saxony in mid 1930. Due to fear of more NSDAP gains, the Saxon Social Democrats were keen on avoiding new state elections. Like their party colleagues at the *Reich* level, they tolerated a bourgeois government from mid-1930 onwards to prevent the NSDAP from getting into government. Henceforth, all parliamentary attempts by the Saxon NSDAP and KPD to bring about the fall of the government and provoke new elections were unsuccessful.

### (iii) Economic survey of Saxony

Saxony was by far the most densely populated German province.<sup>22</sup> Its five million people comprised eight per cent of the German population, although its territory was only 3.2 per cent of the Weimar Republic. While on average 134.2 people inhabited a square kilometre in Germany, the figure in Saxony was 333.<sup>23</sup> Due to its dense population, Saxony was also the most urbanised province in Germany: 34.9 per cent of the population lived in cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants and only 23.9 per cent in communities with less than 2,000 people (the corresponding figures for the *Reich* were 26.8 per cent and 35.6 per cent).<sup>24</sup> Additionally, in Saxony the difference between urban and rural

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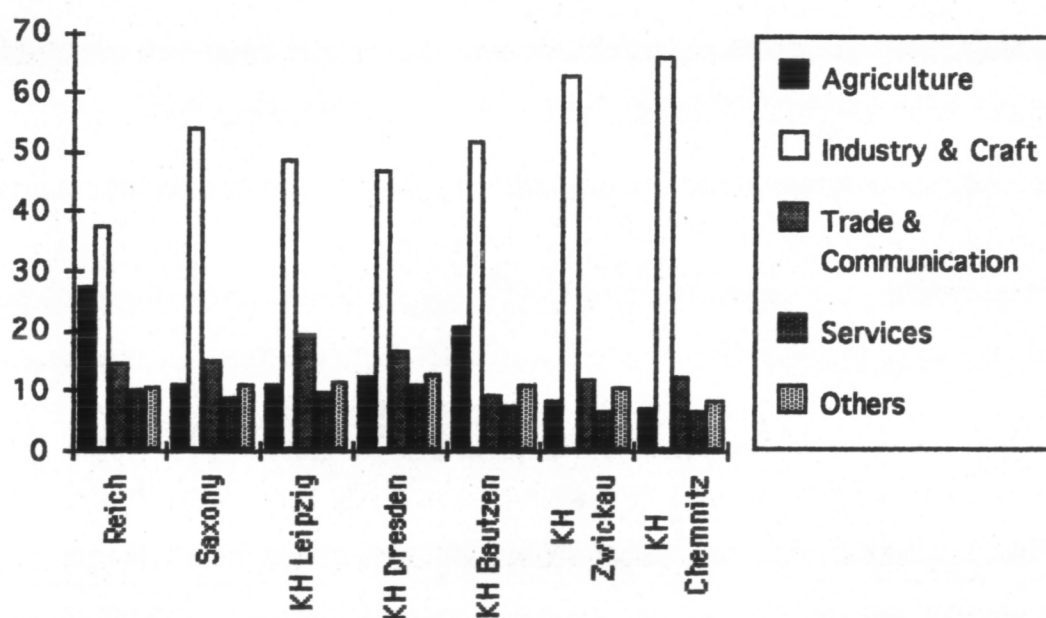
<sup>22</sup> The economic comparison with the other German provinces ignores the cities of Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck. To include them would be misleading as they have no rural areas.

<sup>23</sup> *StJbDR*, (1931).

<sup>24</sup> F. Burkhardt, 'Die Sonderstellung Sachsens im Deutschen Reich und die wirtschaftliche Depression der Gegenwart', *ZSäStLA*, (1931), p. 72.

areas was far less pronounced than in Bavaria or Prussia. Industrial and agricultural regions were often intermixed and the typical village in Saxony was the 'industrial village' (*Industriedorf*). A far larger proportion of the Saxon workforce was employed in industry and handicraft than in the *Reich*, and fewer Saxons were earning their money in agriculture than on the national level (see Figure 1 below). If we measure the level of industrialisation by comparing the percentage of the working population employed in industry/handicraft and trade/communication to the percentage

**Figure 1:** Percentage of people employed in different sectors of the economy:



	Agriculture	Industry & Craft	Trade & Communication	Services	Others
<i>Reich</i>	27.2	36.9	14.7	10.4	10.8
<i>Saxony</i>	11.1	54.1	15.1	8.7	11.0
<i>KH Leipzig</i>	11.0	48.4	19.5	9.6	11.5
<i>KH Dresden</i>	12.3	47.0	16.9	11.0	12.8
<i>KH Bautzen</i>	20.6	51.5	9.3	7.4	11.2
<i>KH Zwickau</i>	8.5	62.6	11.9	6.5	10.5
<i>KH Chemnitz</i>	7.0	65.6	12.4	6.5	8.5

Source: *StJbSa*, (1924/1926), *Falter, Wahlen*, pp. 36-37.

working in agriculture, Saxony was the most industrialised province in Weimar Germany.<sup>25</sup>

It is possible to divide Saxony into three economic regions.<sup>26</sup> The region in the south-west (Chemnitz/Erzgebirge/Vogtland) was characterized by its numerous 'industrial villages'. Chemnitz was the centre of the textile industry in Germany, and was home to mainly small-scale and medium-scale factories. Most of the large-scale factories in Saxony were in the north-west, centred in Leipzig, which possessed a versatile industry and one of the biggest commercial fairs in Europe. Near Leipzig were many 'industrial villages', as well as large lignite fields in the region of Borna and Böhlen. The third industrial region centred around Dresden and in the valley of the Elbe. This consisted mainly of the machine, metal and tobacco industries.

Workers, who comprised 54.0 per cent of the working population in Saxony (*Reich*: 45.1 per cent), were clearly over-represented in contrast to other German provinces.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, Saxony had a very high percentage of female industrial workers.<sup>28</sup> Saxony's industrial structure was also unique: small and medium scale industry dominated, large scale industry was comparatively unimportant. Thirty-six per cent of the employed worked in

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<sup>25</sup> Burkhardt even regards Saxony as the most industrialised province in the world (Burkhardt, 'Sonderstellung', p. 70).

<sup>26</sup> B. Rüdiger, 'Der Freistaat in der Weimarer Republik', *Sächsische Heimatblätter*, 30 (3) (1984), p. 141.

<sup>27</sup> Burkhardt, 'Sonderstellung', p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> In Saxony 33.3 per cent of the people employed in industry were female. In the *Reich* the figure was only 22 per cent (ibid.). The main reason for this was the importance of cheap female labour particularly in textile manufacturing. Nearly 60 per cent of all employed in this sector were women who received between 64 and 84 per cent of the wage of their male counterparts (M. Ahmad, 'Zur sozialen Lage der Arbeiter in Sachsen von 1933 bis 1936 und ihre Widerspiegelung in der Presse', (PhD Leipzig, 1988), p. 25).

companies with less than ten employees (*Reich*: 31.8), 68.7 per cent in companies between eleven and 200 employees (*Reich*: 36.5), and only 8.7 per cent worked in companies with more than 1,000 employees (*Reich*: 12.8).<sup>29</sup>

Looking at the most important industrial sectors in Saxony, one notices many old and traditional industries.<sup>30</sup> Saxony was not well represented in the new industries like the chemical or electrical industry. The only exception was the vehicle industry. The textile industry was the biggest industrial sector in the province. It employed 13.9 per cent (419,520) of the whole working population (3,024,969).<sup>31</sup> Saxony was the centre of Germany's textile industry and employed 34.8 per cent of all Germans in this sector. The other big local industries were the machine, apparatus, and vehicle industry (employed 6.2 per cent of the Saxon workforce), clothing industry (5.5 per cent), building industry (5.1 per cent), food industry (4.3 per cent), production of iron and metal goods (3.7 per cent), and paper and publication industry (3.7 per cent).

It becomes clear that the consumer goods industry dominated over the producer goods industry.<sup>32</sup> The main reason for this was

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<sup>29</sup> K. Schäfer, 'Die strukturelle Arbeitslosigkeit in Sachsen, ihr Umfang und ihre Ursachen', *Die Gemeinde*, (6) (1931), p. 460; D. Petzina and W. Abelshauser and A. Faust (Hrsg.), *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch III. Materialien zur Statistik des Deutschen Reiches 1914-1945* (München, 1978), p. 64.

<sup>30</sup> It is noticeable that the cottage industry was still very widespread, especially in regions with a strong textile industry. In 1928 there were 91877 people employed in the cottage industry in Saxony (*StJbSa*, (1929), pp. 130-131).

<sup>31</sup> For this discussion see *StJbSa*, (1924/26), pp. 11-12; *StJbDR*, (1929), pp. 19-22.

<sup>32</sup> 63 per cent of Saxony's industry belonged to the consumer goods industry and 39 per cent to the producer goods industry. In Germany both groups accounted for 50 per cent (P. Bramstedt, *Die Krisis der sächsischen Industriewirtschaft. Veröffentlichung des Verbandes Sächsischer Industrieller*, (67) (1932), p. 12).

Saxony's scarce endowment of natural resources<sup>33</sup> and the comparatively small number of big companies with a strong capital base. Saxony produced mainly manufactured goods (*Fertigwaren*) and few raw or half-manufactured goods. The manufactured goods industries had to import raw materials and exported not only to other regions in Germany, but to the whole world. More than any region in Germany, Saxony depended on export and the world market.<sup>34</sup> Typical for Saxony was the great variety of her products, which was reflected in the dominance of small-scale and medium-scale industries.

Saxony never really experienced a long period of economic stability during the fourteen years of the Republic and after 1929 entered a crisis more severe than in any other region of Germany. Particularly harmful for Saxony's economic development proved to be the great influence of the consumer goods industries and their dependence on the import of raw materials and the export of manufactured goods. Other negative aspects included comparatively high freight costs, the fact that wages in Saxony rose above the German average between 1913 and 1929<sup>35</sup>, increased competition in foreign markets as a result of the First World War<sup>36</sup>, and growing economic protectionism in world trade<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Saxony had few natural resources, with the exception of a large lignite field in the north-west, a little coal field in the south-west, granite in the south-east, and china-clay around Meißen and Oschatz.

<sup>34</sup> Saxony exported about 40 per cent of all her produced goods in 1931 (Bramstedt, 'Krisis', p. 13). Rüdiger estimates that Saxony accounted for about 28-30 per cent of all exports from Germany to the USA, and for 60 per cent of all textile exports (B. Rüdiger, 'Freistaat in der Weimarer Republik (1918-1933)', in K. Czok (Hrsg.), *Geschichte Sachsens* (Weimar, 1989), p. 449).

<sup>35</sup> The employers argued that this destroyed her competitiveness. However, wages dropped below average again after 1929 (Bramstedt, 'Krisis', pp. 30-40).

<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately for Saxony the 'industrialising countries' were catching up especially in the consumer goods industries. Germany's export of

The kind of problems industry in the region faced during the Weimar era revealed a deep-seated structural crisis of the Saxon economy and made it more susceptible to economic vicissitudes than most other regions. It took her a long time to overcome the economic crisis of the first half of the 1920s, its industries 'flourished' favourably only for a short time from 1927 onwards, and finally, Saxony's economy reacted more dramatically than any other region when the world economic crisis set in at the end of the 1920s.<sup>38</sup> Contemporaries nicknamed Saxony "storm-centre of the trade cycle" (*'Wetterwinkel der Konjunktur'*). Werner concluded that Saxony was more sensitive to the trade cycle than any other industrial region of Germany<sup>39</sup>, and Bramstedt assessed that Saxony suffered most in the Great Depression<sup>40</sup>.

The condition of its industries was good in 1927. But Saxony belonged to those regions in Germany where a slow downturn of the trade cycle in some sectors of industry from spring 1928 already augured a new recession. The KH Leipzig analysed this economic development in 1928: "The very good situation of the economy in 1927 already showed the first signs of a slow decline at the beginning of 1928, which continued in the industries until the end of the year."<sup>41</sup> In winter 1928/29 the situation worsened.

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consumer goods in comparison to the producer goods decreased continuously during the Weimar Republic.

<sup>37</sup> Saxony managed to make good most of the lost markets in the East by exporting more to the West after the First World War. This new market, however, was increasingly closed due to protectionism after 1929 (Bramstedt, 'Krisis', pp. 20-23).

<sup>38</sup> Also see K. Werner, *Die deutschen Wirtschaftsgebiete in der Krise. Statistische Studie zur regional vergleichenden Konjunkturbetrachtung* (Jena, 1932), pp. 28-29.

<sup>39</sup> Werner, *Wirtschaftsgebiete*, p. 27.

<sup>40</sup> Bramstedt, 'Krisis', p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> STA L, AH Döbeln, Nr. 2409, Jahresbericht der KH Leipzig 1928, p. 3.



Then, in the middle of 1929 the number of unemployed, shut-downs and bankruptcies in Saxony rose at an unprecedented speed, high above the average in Germany. The KH Leipzig recorded: "The slow decline for industry, trade and business, which had already started in 1928, continued without interruption ... and worsened to a crisis at the end of the year (1929) ... Shut-downs, unemployment and short-time work exemplify the catastrophic situation of the economy at the end of the year."<sup>42</sup>

At that time, production and employment suddenly collapsed in Saxony unlike anywhere else in Germany. This was closely connected with the loss of overseas markets and the breakdown of world trade, from which Saxony suffered with particular severity. Saxony's textile exports dropped by 56.1 per cent and that of textile machines by 83 per cent to the USA between 1929 and 1932.<sup>43</sup> The region was additionally hit by the curtailment of foreign investment and the withdrawal of short-term loans. This was a hard blow for Saxony due to the general capital shortage.<sup>44</sup> Schäfer drew a picture of an old industry which had problems of adapting to new, modern forms of production, finance, and management.<sup>45</sup> The number of bankruptcies per capita in Saxony was also higher than in any other region in Germany during the Great Depression.<sup>46</sup> Between 7.6 per cent of all independent people

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., Jahresbericht der KH Leipzig 1929, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> H. Schwarzbach, 'Die Differenzen zwischen dem Verband Sächsischer Industrieller und dem Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie 1931', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 12 (3) (1971), p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> There were no big banks and only few large companies in Saxony. Many experts regarded the capital shortage of its industry as one of the main reasons for the severity of the crisis in Saxony.

<sup>45</sup> Schäfer, 'Arbeitslosigkeit', p. 462.

<sup>46</sup> See H. Adler, 'Die Wirtschaftskrise im Spiegel der sächsischen Konkursstatistik', *ZSäStLA*, (1932/33), p. 310.

working in agriculture, industry and trade went bankrupt in 1930, whereas the figure for the *Reich* was only 3 per cent.<sup>47</sup>

The figure best expressing the dramatic economic crisis which unfolded in Saxony was the rapid rise in the rate of unemployment<sup>48</sup> (see Figure 2 below). Whereas Saxony still had the lowest unemployment rates of any region in Germany in 1927, it exceeded all other regions by the middle of 1929 and remained the highest until 1937.<sup>49</sup> There were about 690,000 registered unemployed in Saxony in the middle of 1932, which was 13 per cent of the total unemployed in Germany. Saxony's four large cities had some of the highest unemployment rates amongst cities with a population greater than 100,000 in the Republic.<sup>50</sup>

The distinct features of the economic crisis in Saxony were the enormous speed with which it unfolded and the scale of its impact. The worst hit industries had shown unemployment rates which were far below average in Germany up to the middle of 1929.<sup>51</sup> The first major sector hit was the metal industry. Up to this time it had one of the lowest unemployment rates in Germany, but this rose far above all others in the following months. The situation in the textile industry was similarly unstable, with unemployment

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<sup>47</sup> Of all regions in Germany only the city of Lübeck had a higher figure with 9.6 per cent (Burkhardt, 'Sonderstellung', p. 78).

<sup>48</sup> All figures used below are 'official' unemployment figures of the registered unemployed. The 'real' figures, including the unemployed who were not registered, was between 4 and 6 per cent higher (J. Falter and T. Lindenberger and S. Schumann (Hrsg.), *Wahlen und Abstimmungen in der Weimarer Republik* (München, 1986), p. 38).

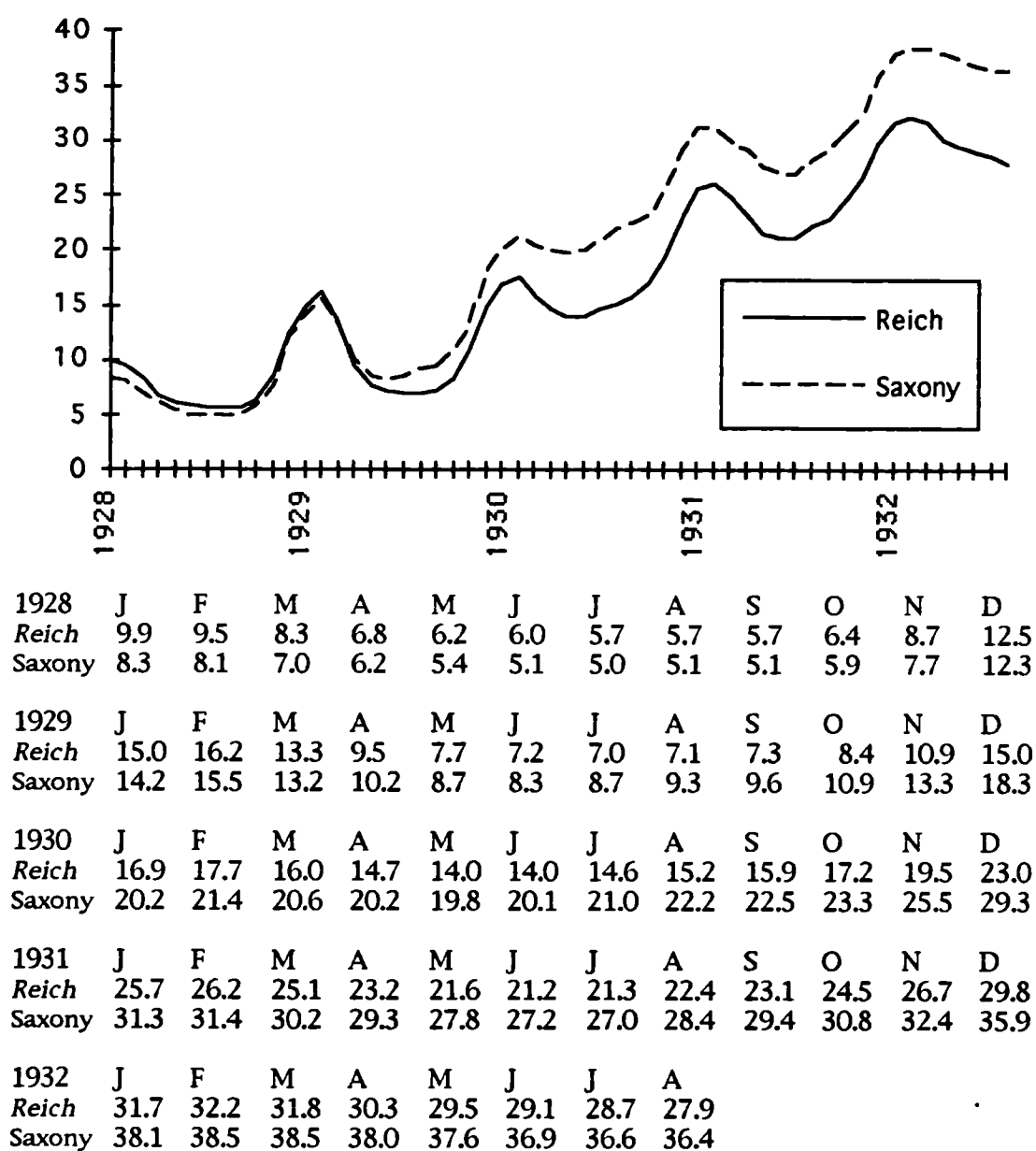
<sup>49</sup> Bramstedt, 'Krisis', p. 7; W. Bramke, 'Sachsen unter der faschistischen Diktatur (1933-1945)', *Sächsische Heimatblätter*, 30 (4) (1984), p. 161.

<sup>50</sup> In December 1931 Chemnitz and Plauen ranked first and second with unemployment rates of 15.9 and 15.7 per cent. Dresden and Leipzig ranked fifth and twelfth with respective rates of 14.1 and 13.6 per cent (*StJbDR*, (1932), p. 303).

<sup>51</sup> For this discussion see Bramstedt, 'Krisis', pp. 52, 58.

rising rapidly at the end of 1929. The building industry in Saxony was still booming and had the lowest unemployment rate in

Figure 2: Registered unemployed in Saxony and the Reich



Source: P. Bramsted, 'Die Krisis der sächsischen Industriewirtschaft', *Veröffentlichung des Verbandes Sächsischer Industrieller*, (67) (1932), p. 47.

Germany in 1928. In 1929 construction started to contract and nearly collapsed in 1930. No sector suffered a greater increase in unemployment.

The strong dependence of Saxony on the world market became evident again in 1931. In the first half of 1931 there was some recovery mainly due to the demand for consumer goods (the textile industry in particular profited from this). However, Saxony was hit severely when Britain left the Gold Standard in September 1931 (the 'foundation' on which world trade had rested), when short term loans were withdrawn, and most countries closed their domestic markets to foreign goods. Its metal industry and subsequently its textile industry collapsed, showing the highest rates of unemployment in Germany.<sup>52</sup>

The severity of the crisis and its repercussions for the people of Saxony become evident by looking at vital statistics: In Saxony fewer live births occurred than in any other province in 1929.<sup>53</sup> Saxony had the second highest male suicide rate in Germany<sup>54</sup> and was the only one of the large provinces where comparatively fewer people married in 1931 than in 1913.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-27.

<sup>53</sup> For 1,000 citizens 15.9 living babies were born. In the *Reich* 17.9 per cent (*StJbDR*, (1931)).

<sup>54</sup> In 1929, 5.8 men committed suicide out of 10,000. In the *Reich* the figure was 3.8 (*ibid.*).

<sup>55</sup> Burkhardt, 'Die bevölkerungspolitische Lage in Sachsen Ende 1932', *ZSäStLA*, (1932/33), p. 301.

## **Part I: Chronology:**

### **The Nazi Party in Saxony between 1920 and 1933**

## 2. From the founding of the NSDAP to the first party ban in Saxony (January 1919-December 1922)

### (i) Munich/Bavaria

After the German Workers' Party (DAP) was founded by Anton Drexler and Karl Harrer in Munich in January 1919, Adolf Hitler joined the party in September 1919 and quickly became both chief of propaganda and a member of the executive committee. The party was renamed the 'National Socialist Workers' Party' (NSDAP) in February 1920. The NSDAP, whose party membership had risen from 1,100 in June 1920 to 3,300 in August 1921, was competing for support among the far right together with similar groups. Stachura argued that the "oratorical and propagandistic skills of Hitler eventually allowed the NSDAP to make something of a minor breakthrough in terms of public recognition, if mainly on account of his anti-Semitism which was vehement even by Munich standards."<sup>56</sup> After a leadership dispute Hitler took over the control of the party in July 1921. Until the end of 1921 the activities of the NSDAP were limited mainly to Bavaria. In mid-September 1921 Hitler's first circular letter, whose aim it was to establish control over local branches outside Munich, was met with considerable passive resistance. In a national party conference in January 1922 Hitler gathered the leaders of the provincial local branches and postulated the need for a "ruthless, tight organisation."<sup>57</sup> This was Hitler's first attempt to bind all party leaders to himself. A massive vote of confidence at the conference then started the slow development of Hitler's complete, personalized control over the

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<sup>56</sup> P. D. Stachura, 'The Political Strategy of the Nazi Party, 1919-1933', *German Studies Review*, 3 (2) (1980), pp. 263-264.

<sup>57</sup> Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 26.

party and the establishment of an efficient and centralized party machine.

(ii) The origins of the NSDAP in Saxony: anti-Semitism and *völkisch* movements

How did the Nazi movement spread to Saxony? Who were its early activists and supporters? And what were their goals? The beginning of the Nazi movement in Saxony was similar to other parts of Germany.<sup>58</sup> The first activists and sympathisers of the NSDAP were radical anti-Semites and nationalists, strong opponents of the newly created Republic, and members of *völkisch* groups or paramilitary formations (*Wehrverbände*). Most founding members of the earliest Saxon NSDAP branches came from paramilitary formations (see Table 1 below). War veterans too, played a crucial role in the formation, and development of the Nazi Party in Saxony.<sup>59</sup>

The activities of members of paramilitary formations and war veterans were often synonymous with the *völkisch* movement. *Völkisch* groups were offsprings of extreme anti-Semitic and nationalist organisations which had already existed before 1914 and were organised shortly after the First World War. In Saxony, as in other parts in Germany, they were the most important

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<sup>58</sup> See especially Noakes, *Lower Saxony*; D. Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party, Vol. 1: 1919-1933* (Pittsburgh, Pa, 1969); Tracey, 'Thuringia'; W. Böhnke, *Die NSDAP im Ruhrgebiet* (Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1974); G. Paul, *Die NSDAP des Saargebietes 1920-1935. Der Verspätete Aufstieg der NSDAP in der katholisch-proletarischen Provinz* (Saarbrücken, 1987).

<sup>59</sup> Table: The percentage of war veterans in the Saxon NSDAP:

	before 14.9.1930	15.9.1930- 30.1.1933	after 30.1.1933	1935
members	11,383	75,896	147,602	234,681
war veterans	3,997 (35.1%)	24,851 (32.7%)	65,390 (44.3%)	94,238 (40.1%)

Source: NSDAP *Parteistatistik* 1935.

**Table 1: Selected branches of the NSDAP in Saxony: background and membership size**

place/ founded	background	unifying experience	number
<b>Zwickau</b> <sup>1</sup> 11.10.1921	DVSTB, <i>Bund nationalgesinnter Soldaten</i>	Esser and Hitler in Zwickau 1922, Marxist terror and imprisonment 1922-23, DT in Coburg 1922, party meeting in M/1. <i>Sturmflagge</i> 1923 DTf in M 1923, DT in Hof 1923	2/1922: 57 (34 SA), 4/1923: 200, 12/1930: 400
<b>Chemnitz</b> <sup>1</sup> 21.02.1922	DVSTB, <i>Reichshammerbund</i> , <i>Turnverein Jahn</i> , anti-Semites	DT in Weimar 1920, DT in Detmold, room-brawl 1923, party meeting in M 1923, DT in Hof 1923, Brawl at Goebbel meeting 1925, Hitler visits in Chemnitz	4/1923: 200, 4/1929: 300
<b>Markneukirchen</b> <sup>1</sup> 16.03.1922	<i>Orgesch</i> , <i>Brigade Erhardt</i>	Terror by Hölz, DT in Coburg 1922, party meeting in M/1. <i>Sturmflagge</i> , DT in Hof 1923, room-brawl in Oelsnitz 1924	4/1923: 90
<b>Plauen</b> 21.05.1922	DVSTB	Party meeting in Munich 1923, DT in Hof 1923	4/1923: 400
<b>Freiberg</b> <sup>1</sup> 20.11.1922	Ex-service men, nationalists	Party meeting in M 1923, Verbotzeit, party meeting in Weimar 1926, Hitler in Freiberg 1930	4/1923: 21, 1927: 16 SA
<b>Leipzig</b> 22.11.1922	<i>Eiserne Schar</i> , <i>Deutschnationaler Jugendbund</i> , <i>Organisation Consul</i> , DsP, <i>Stahlhelm</i> (SA)	Police surveillance, Marxist terror, DT in Hof 1923, Hitler speech 1926, party meeting in Weimar 1926	4/1923: 145 (20SA), 1925: 30, 1926: 50
<b>Colditz</b> 27.12.1922	<i>Wehrwolf</i> , <i>Bund Sachsen im Reich</i> , anti-Semites, nationalists	DT in Halle, Hitler speech 1926, Nazi sport meeting 1926	
<b>Aue</b> <sup>1</sup> 1923	anti-Marxists	DTf in Munich 1923, DT in Hof 1923 hand-shake with Hitler, brawls 1930	
<b>Werdau</b> <sup>1</sup> 21.03.1923	'citizen's leagues', <i>Stahlhelm</i>	Marxist terror (searched & beaten up), comradeship, DT in Hof 1923	3/1923: 22 1926: 8 SS
<b>Schwarzenberg</b> 25.03.1924		Feder speech in Schwarzenberg 1924	3/1924: 8, 1925: 50 SA
<b>Limbach</b> 1925	DtsP, <i>Wehrwolf</i>	DTf in Munich 1923, brawl at DT 1925, Hitler speech 1926, party meeting in Weimar 1926	1925: 17
<b>Annaberg</b> 01.03.1925	<i>Orgesch</i> , <i>Wehrwolf</i> , <i>Brüder von Stein</i>	DTf in Munich 1923, Marxist terror, hardships, comradeship, links to Hof	1925: 25, 1927: 75 (32 SA), 1930: 545, 1932: 1750
<b>Bautzen</b> 02.06.1925	<i>Wehrwolf</i> , <i>Wiking Bund</i> , anti-Semites	Brawls, Marxist terror, comradeship	1924: 18, 1927: 45 SA in Ober-
<b>Crimmitschau</b> <sup>1</sup> 12.8.1927	<i>Wehrwolf</i>	Marxist terror, Brawls 1929/30	lausitz

<sup>1</sup>: founded with the help from Tittmann (Zwickau); DT: *Deutscher Tag*; DTf: *Deutsches Turnfest*; M: Munich

Source: Histories of local NSDAP branches, BA DH, newspaper articles.



supporters for the early Nazi movement. Anti-Semitism was a widespread and established phenomenon in Saxony. Retallack calls Saxony the "cradle" of "political anti-Semitism".<sup>60</sup> The first International Anti-Jewish Congress was held in Dresden in 1882 and subsequently anti-Semitic associations sprang up quickly in Saxony, counting 136 in 1890.<sup>61</sup> Anti-Semitic candidates, who were challenging the traditional 'politics of notables' (*Honoratioren-politik*), received 15.9 per cent of the vote in Saxony in the June 1893 *Reichstag* elections.<sup>62</sup> This was remarkable as Jews only accounted for 0.27 per cent of the total population of the Kingdom of Saxony and mainly lived in a few large cities. Levy argued "neither the number, character, nor economic power of Saxony's Jewish inhabitants offered a convincing explanation of why the parliamentary anti-Semites had scored such a decisive victory there."<sup>63</sup> In addition to the political and populist anti-Semitism of the German Reformers and Socials, there was also the presence of a more deep-seated and ideological anti-Semitism in Saxony. The Pan-German League, founded in 1891, propagated extreme anti-

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<sup>60</sup> See J. Retallack, 'Antisocialism and Electoral Politics in Regional Perspective: The Kingdom of Saxony', in Jones/Retallack, *New Perspectives*, p. 50.

<sup>61</sup> Retallack, 'Antisocialism', p. 66.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 66, 73. Unfortunately, Retallack does not discuss who these anti-Semites were. He only mentions the view of contemporary Conservative, who thought the radical anti-Semites were mainly supported by "the most impoverished and least sedentary elements of the *Mittelstand*" (ibid., p. 79).

<sup>63</sup> Levy suggested that the anti-Semitic parties in Saxon had something positive to offer for the local middle classes: "Large numbers of them chose the anti-Semites to carry their protest against serious economic troubles ... They shared in the general illusion of the anti-Semitic parties' promise of effectiveness and were misled by their uncompromising opposition to the Caprivi government. Furthermore, the anti-Semites appeared young and vital, willing to go further than the middle-class parties or the Conservatives, which ... had been unresponsive to the needs of the *Mittelstand*" (R. S. Levy, *The Downfall of the Anti-Semitic Political Parties in Imperial Germany* (New Haven, London, 1975), pp. 95-97). The similarities between the rise of the anti-Semitic parties in the 1890s as a means of protest for the middle classes in Saxony, with the rise of the local Nazi movement in the late 1920s, is striking.

Semitism, nationalism and expansionism, and had a prominent position in Saxony. The League was a central element of the *völkisch* movement, became an important recruitment field for the *Deutschvölkische Schutz- und Trutzbund* (DVSTB) and the Nazi Party, and "served as a chief provider of practically all the elements that went into the ideological turbidity of the Nazis' programme and Hitler's *Weltanschauung* (world view)."<sup>64</sup> "Nowhere was the League stronger than in the Kingdom of Saxony" and local branches in "Dresden and Leipzig were among the largest and most active in the country."<sup>65</sup> The League was also strong in small communities in the kingdom, particularly in the Vogtland, with Plauen as its centre.<sup>66</sup>

The DVSTB was the most prominent, active and effective of these radical anti-Semitic organisations. Many of the early local Nazi activists, including Fritz Tittmann and Martin Mutschmann, who were to become the most prominent Nazis in the region, were members of the DVSTB in the early days of the Republic and soon started to build up the Nazi Party in Saxony.<sup>67</sup> It was appropriate

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<sup>64</sup> R. Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German. A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston, London, Sydney, 1984), p. 300.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>66</sup> Chickering explains the strength of the League in Saxony: "The influx of Czechs into Saxony, particularly the immigration of cheap Czech labour into the industrial centres of Dresden and Leipzig, was sufficient to feed anxiety; so was the fact that Saxony served as a transition station for Polish, Jewish, and other migration out of Galicia and areas to the east" (Chickering, *Pan-German League*, p. 144). Similarly, Chickering explains the extraordinary activity of the local branch in Plauen with social and ethnic tensions caused by immigration of Czech labour: "In these circumstances, the rhetoric of ethnic struggle adapted easily to the campaign against the Socialists, and the Pan-German League became a leading force in the consolidation of the non-socialist forces" (*ibid.*, p. 145). Again, the similarities to the strength of the Saxon Nazi movement, which had its stronghold in Plauen, and the small communities of the Vogtland, are striking.

<sup>67</sup> See 'Ein Leben für Deutschland', *FK*, 9.3.1939. When the DVSTB dissolved itself in early 1923 the leaders advised their members to join the NSDAP (Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 33).

that Hermann Esser, one of the most notorious anti-Semites amongst the Nazi leadership in Munich, was the first prominent NSDAP speaker who attempted to rally support for the movement in Saxony. The anti-Semitic speeches met great enthusiasm by many middle-class visitors. However, at the same time they drove more moderate visitors away from the Nazis.<sup>68</sup> At the end of 1922 the police reported from the fiercely anti-Semitic NSDAP in Chemnitz: "Originally the branch had about 200 members. Apparently half of the members, mainly teachers, have recently left the party due to the extreme emphasis on anti-Semitism."<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, anti-Semitism continued to feature in Saxony and remained one of the most distinctive aspects of the local Nazi movement.<sup>70</sup>

*Völkisch* groups remained a permanent, and the most significant recruitment pool for the Saxon Nazis until the late 1920s. Many of their members joined the NSDAP due to its radical features or because their own *völkisch* groups disintegrated over the years. Furthermore, as the paramilitary organisations and most *völkisch* organisations were neither political parties nor affiliated to political parties, some members were dissatisfied with the lack of a concrete

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<sup>68</sup> After two speakers of the USPD had expressed their disgust with Esser's extremely anti-semitic speech in Zwickau in late 1921 the majority followed their advice and left the meeting (BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, LPV, Nr. 175, 19.12.1921).

<sup>69</sup> BA DH, Z/A VI 2029, EK, PP Dresden an Mdl, 9.12.1922, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> E.g. the Saxon police reported that seventy-five Nazis from Plauen clashed with Jewish travellers on the way to Chemnitz at the end of 1922. The latter felt forced to pull the emergency brake (ibid., p. 5). The *Völkischer Bote für die Oberlausitz* asked NSDAP supporters to sign lists for a referendum about Jews: "All Jewish immigrants who arrived after 1 August 1914 have to be expelled. Their property, as far it had been acquired unlawfully, is to be confiscated ... The Jews who live with us have to be put under foreign jurisdiction and have to be treated like foreign citizens. A special Jewish code has to be drawn up and made into law" (STA D, SdStKa, Nr. 134, Bezirk Zittau, 4.8.1924).

political programme and the lack of radicalism behind their ideas, or even the bourgeois outlook of these organisations.<sup>71</sup> What Noakes analysed for Lower Saxony was also true for Saxony: Some right-wing activists "who were disenchanted with the bourgeois composition and style of the *völkisch* movement, welcomed the NSDAP as a party with radical aims which projected an image of dynamic activity and showed an understanding of how to appeal to the masses."<sup>72</sup>

(iii) The NSDAP spreads into Saxony

The ideas of the Nazi movement and stories of the orator Hitler and his Storm-troopers were brought to Saxony through a handful of members of the *Freikorps* or army, students<sup>73</sup>, salesmen and others who had come in contact with the NSDAP in Munich at the beginning of the 1920s. As in other regions in Germany<sup>74</sup>, it was the driving force of a few devoted activists which was responsible for spreading Nazi ideology and founding local NSDAP branches in Saxony at this early stage. Fritz Tittmann from Zwickau was the most important Nazi activist in Saxony until 1924. After he had learned about the Nazi movement from Karl Kolbow from Freiberg in April 1921, he attended a Nazi rally with Hitler in Munich in

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<sup>71</sup> Also see Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 33.

<sup>72</sup> Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>73</sup> The students Kolbow founded the NSDAP branch in Freiberg and Pietsch in Mittweida. In early 1923 a majority of the students in Leipzig adopted a resolution that they supported the *völkisch* idea (*LVZ*, Nr. 36, 12.2.1923). This was similar to other parts of Germany: E.g. students founded the first NSDAP branch in Oldenburg and Göttingen (Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, pp. 21-22).

<sup>74</sup> E.g. Bruno Wenzel and Gustav Seifert in Hanover, or Rudolf Haase in Göttingen (*ibid.*, pp. 14-17, 22-23).

summer that year and became a member of the NSDAP.<sup>75</sup> In the course of the next several months Tittmann managed to find eleven like-minded people and founded the first Nazi Party branch in Saxony in Zwickau on 11 October 1921. It was only the fourth local Nazi Party branch outside Bavaria.<sup>76</sup> From Zwickau the Nazi movement quickly spread to a few places in south-western Saxony. Tittmann was relentless in propagating the radical ideas of the party.<sup>77</sup> Due to his initiative most of the earliest party branches, who were mainly located in the south-west of Saxony, were founded (see Table 1). His extensive activities were rewarded by the Munich leadership, which appointed Tittmann leader of the NSDAP in west Saxony in mid-1922.<sup>78</sup>

**(iv) The first NSDAP branches in Saxony: Zwickau, Chemnitz, Markneukirchen, Plauen, Freiberg, Leipzig, Dresden**

Zwickau was the centre of the Saxon Nazi movement until the Hitler Putsch at the end of 1923, and remained one of the most important Nazi branches in the region.<sup>79</sup> The significance of Zwickau for the early Nazi movement in Saxony was due to Tittmann, who used Zwickau as his headquarters. As in the rest of the economically

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<sup>75</sup> Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', pp. 224-225. His source, however, is not clear.

<sup>76</sup> Compare with Böhnke *Ruhrgebiet*, pp. 40-41. The widespread claim of the Saxon Nazis, that Zwickau was the first NSDAP party branch outside Bavaria is not true (*Fünfzehn Jahre NSDAP in Zwickau (1922-37)*, p. 10).

<sup>77</sup> Stoschek claims that Munich supported Tittmann's efforts by sending him twenty-six men who were active in Zwickau, Plauen and Chemnitz from October 1921 onwards. In spring 1923 too, apparently sixty Nazis from Bavaria supported the Nazis in Saxony. His sources are not clear (Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', p. 225).

<sup>78</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Bericht über die nationalsozialistische Bewegung im Freistaat Sachsen, p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Particularly active NSDAP branches played a crucial role in spreading the Nazi movement throughout Germany. E.g. Zweibrücken in the Saar-Pfalz region (Paul, *Saarland*, p. 37), or Hanover and Göttingen in the Ruhrgebiet (Noakes, *Lower Saxony*).

depressed south-west of Saxony, some citizens, especially members of the middle classes, were receptive to the Nazis' radical anti-Semitism, anti-socialism, nationalism and hatred of the Versailles Treaty. This was quickly realized by the Nazi leadership in Munich. Hermann Esser spoke in Zwickau in December 1921, and again in May 1922. The far right placed great hopes on the development of their organisations and parties in the area. A meeting of *völkisch* groups of north- and middle Germany took place in Zwickau on 23 April 1922. The meeting was also attended by Hitler.<sup>80</sup> Of all Saxon NSDAP branches, Zwickau had the greatest party membership, the most active party members before the end of 1923, and the best attendance at early NSDAP meetings in Munich or other *völkisch* meetings (see Table 1). Two Nazis from Zwickau attended the leadership meeting in Munich in January 1922, some visited the *Deutscher Tag* in Coburg in October 1922, and the SA from Zwickau and Markneukirchen received the first consecrated flag in Saxony from Hitler in 1923.<sup>81</sup>

The founders of the Nazi Party branch in Chemnitz came from extremely anti-Semitic groups who used to meet in the restaurant 'Deutscher Krug' before the First World War. These local right-wing radicals organised themselves in various *völkisch* groups like the *Reichshammerbund*, the DVSTB and *Deutschvölkische Turnverein Jahn* after the war and formed the nucleus for the local Nazi Party which was founded in early 1922.<sup>82</sup>

When the Social Democrats called the small town of Markneukirchen a "centre of the Orgesch" in 1921 - a notorious

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<sup>80</sup> The local Nazis claimed that on this occasion Hitler spoke for the first time outside Bavaria (*NSDAP Zwickau*, p. 11).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Fünfzehn Jahre NSDAP in Chemnitz (1922-1937)*, p. 18.

*Freikorps* group - they were describing both the activities of young Bavarian former *Freikorps* members, and an extremely conservative and right-wing population.<sup>83</sup> A handful of these *völkisch* sympathizers founded the local NSDAP branch, the third in Saxony, in March 1922. The few local Nazi supporters - probably less than ten in 1922 - were extremely active. They visited the *Deutscher Tag* in Coburg in October 1922, organised the first public meeting in December 1922, and went to the first national NSDAP meeting in Munich in January 1923.<sup>84</sup> The SA from Markneukirchen took part at all Nazi activities in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland, and by spring 1923 the police estimated the local NSDAP membership as ninety.<sup>85</sup> The citizens of Markneukirchen were extremely anxious about social upheavals. The town in the AH Oelsnitz was one of the few places where the SPD did not heavily benefit from the defeat of the old regime shortly after the First World War and stayed far below the 50 per cent in the 1919 *Reichstag* elections (44.8 per cent).<sup>86</sup> The *Völkisch-Soziale Block* (VSB) - a coalition of the *völkisch* movement led by the NSDAP - already became the strongest party with 40 per cent of the votes in the May 1924 *Reichstag* elections.<sup>87</sup> The Nazi Party remained the strongest party in Markneukirchen in every election until 1933, and Hitler was given the freedom of the city in spring 1932.<sup>88</sup> The early support for the Nazi movement in Markneukirchen can partly be explained by its

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<sup>83</sup> *Fünfzehn Jahre NSDAP in Markneukirchen (1922-1937)*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>85</sup> BA DH Z/C 17411, EK, 'NS Sachsen'.

<sup>86</sup> ZSäStLA, (1920/21).

<sup>87</sup> *NSDAP Markneukirchen*, p. 20.

<sup>88</sup> The town council also decided to put Hitler's picture in its chamber, and to flag the town hall at Hitler's birthday in 1932 (*Vorwärts*, Nr. 190, 23.4.1932).

industrial background. Markneukirchen was a typical small town in the Vogtland, dominated by small scale and cottage industry (in its case the production of musical instruments). The local citizens were prosperous until the impact of the First World War damaged its industries and started a continuous decline. Many members of the middle class were anxious to maintain their wealth, were concerned with political instability, and foreign competition at the end of 1918. The Nazis' anti-Marxist and anti-Semitic aims and their preparedness to take on the radical working class, naturally appealed to them.

The fourth Nazi Party branch in Saxony was founded in Plauen on 21 May 1922 and was one of the most active ones. From 1924 onwards, Plauen increasingly took over Zwickau's leading role in the Nazi movement in the region. From the re-organisation of the party in early 1925 onwards, it became the undisputed centre of the NSDAP in Saxony until March 1933. The main reason for this was the emergence of Martin Mutschmann, a textile industrialist from Plauen, as the leading Nazi in Saxony during the *Verbotszeit*<sup>89</sup> in 1924. Plauen and the surrounding Vogtland was the perfect breeding place for the Nazi movement and became their stronghold in Saxony and one of their major bastions in the *Reich*. The dramatic decline of the textile industry led to economic hardships and unemployment, and a strong polarization of local society. The police remarked about the region: "It's a popular saying that there are only Communists and *Deutschnationale* (German Nationalists) in the Vogtland."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Period when the NSDAP was baned in Germany after the Hitler Putsch.

<sup>90</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11113, Blatt 30 (Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', p. 241).



The Nazi branch in Freiberg, a mining town with a small university at the edge of the Erzgebirge, was founded in November 1922 by the student Karl Kolbow.<sup>91</sup> The few local activists were war veterans, members of the *Reichswehr*, and students. Except for a small circle, the Nazi Party seemed to have disintegrated during the *Verbotszeit*, and by 1927 there were still fewer than twenty Nazi activists in the town.

The early development of the Nazi movement in Leipzig and Dresden is difficult to assess due to the scarcity of sources, and the complicated situation of an extremely divided *völkisch* movement. Although the first NSDAP branch in Leipzig was already founded in November 1922, and local party members were noted for their activities in the first several months<sup>92</sup>, the further development of the Nazi Party in the town was extremely slow. This was due to the strong competition from the *Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei* (DVFP) in Leipzig, which was the strongest *völkisch* party in the KH Leipzig. The DVFP was more successful in absorbing local anti-Semites and radical right-wing supporters, and was also able to win over local Nazis.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, the Nazi movement in Leipzig was hampered by internal disputes and extreme factionalism.<sup>94</sup> Only the emergence of the ruthless Walter Dönicke who established himself as the leader of the local branch from mid-1926 onwards, made possible a slow expansion and the creation of an efficient and unified party machine. Moreover, the Nazis themselves blamed

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<sup>91</sup> *Fünfzehn Jahre NSDAP Freiberg (1939)*.

<sup>92</sup> E.g. see BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK.

<sup>93</sup> More than a third of NSDAP members joined the *Großdeutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft* in January 1923, which later joined the DVFP (BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, PP Leipzig, 24.2.1923). The DVFP in Leipzig seemed to enjoy great influence. Reinhold Wulle, party leader and member of the *Reichstag*, spoke at its first meeting on 15.1.1923 (ibid.).

<sup>94</sup> See 'Das Werden und Wachsen der NSDAP in Leipzig', *LNN*, 4./5.6.1933.

unfavourable socio-economic conditions for why they found "the struggle to infiltrate national socialist ideas particularly difficult" in Leipzig.<sup>95</sup>

Even smaller than in Leipzig was the early Nazi movement in Dresden, which came into being in early 1923.<sup>96</sup> The local Nazis remained active even after their party was officially banned.<sup>97</sup> When the former captain Hellmuth von Mücke and Professor Kuhn, two prominent figures from Dresden, joined the VSB in 1924, the movement showed increased activities in the state capital and generally in eastern Saxony.<sup>98</sup> The primary reasons for the overall weakness of the local NSDAP were the extreme divisions of the *völkisch* movement in the state capital, and the inability of the NSDAP to establish dominance over other *völkisch* parties until 1928.<sup>99</sup>

#### (v) The Nazis' first public meetings in Saxony

Apart from the early activities in Zwickau, the Saxon Nazis appeared for the first time in a co-ordinated series of meetings

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<sup>95</sup> The Nazis argued their case by reflecting that Leipzig was a stronghold of the SPD. They underlined this by showing that more than twice as many pupils in Leipzig chose to attend lessons in *Lebenskunde* (literally 'life knowledge') rather than lessons in religion compared to Dresden and Chemnitz (29.3 per cent compared to 14.3 and 12.7 per cent). Moreover, because many of the citizens in Leipzig were in "professions which acquire intelligence above the average" (e.g. the booktrade or graphic design), they "lack the instinct" to believe in the Nazi movement ('Kampf um Leipzig', VB, 12.9.1932).

<sup>96</sup> See *Die Geschichte der Sächsischen SA von den ersten Anfängen bis zur heutigen Gruppe Sa* (1934), p. 27.

<sup>97</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Halbwochenbericht, 10.4.1923.

<sup>98</sup> Also see Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', p. 255.

<sup>99</sup> The DtsP and the DVFP were much stronger than the NSDAP in Dresden for a long time. The NSDAP only managed to become the by far strongest party on the radical right in Dresden in the 1928 Reichstag elections (LNN, Nr. 142, 21.5.1928).

organised by all their local party branches at the end of 1922. Tittmann was the speaker and tried to appeal to those dissatisfied with the situation after the First World War. He blamed three groups for the misery of the German people: The Social Democrats were blamed for most of the misfortune as they were held responsible for the lost war. Capitalists and profiteers made profit from the German peoples, and finally Tittmann condemned the Jews as driving force behind world capitalism and accused them of uniting in a conspiracy to exploit the Germans. Striking in Tittmann's speeches was the total rejection of the Republican system, his intense hatred of the Social Democrats and Jews, and finally the extreme radicalism with which he propagated his ideas. Most of the visitors came from right-wing circles and were mainly young. In the first public meeting in Chemnitz in November 1922, Tittmann spoke about the betrayal of the SPD after November 1918, "which brought freedom only for racketeers and slave-drivers of the *Volk*, for profiteers and stock exchange speculators ... and bank jews."<sup>100</sup> The 350 young visitors were to a large extent supporters of other *völkisch* groups which the Nazis had targeted in their propaganda before the meeting. The audience of 400 in a similar meeting in Plauen a day later, were "mainly supporters of the DNVP, also industrialists and former officers" and "only a few workers."<sup>101</sup> The police in Leipzig noted that the crowd of 250 in the town's first public NSDAP meeting at the end of December were "people who have been seen in rightist meetings in the past" and included two high ranking policemen.<sup>102</sup> The local SPD newspaper

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<sup>100</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Chemnitz, 29.11.1922.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., Halbwochenbericht, 5.12.1923.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., Leipzig, 23.12.1922.

was more detailed and reported that "a very mixed audience was present. Salaried employees, civil servants, also some workers, master craftsmen, and women turned up. Most of the visitors were young, probably mainly members of the DHV."<sup>103</sup> There was generally loud applause when Tittmann mentioned the murder of Rathenau, and when he advised anyone to slap German girls publicly in the face when they were seen together with Jews.<sup>104</sup> The Nazis made notorious threats to anyone trying to hinder their mission. Tittmann declared that "they would react with ruthless violence" if legal propaganda work by the NSDAP was hindered. He went on to say that opponents of the Nazis "will hang on a lamp post higher than racketeers and profiteers."<sup>105</sup> All these statements received great applause.

In the discussion during a Nazi meeting in Chemnitz a participant said: "If the government and the political parties do not protect the *Volk*, it has to help itself."<sup>106</sup> Another Nazi told the police: "We fight for justice and order to protect the citizens regardless the government. It does not matter if it is a Monarchy or a Republic."<sup>107</sup> The Nazis portrayed themselves as looking after the betrayed and exploited masses, and fighting for justice. In the pursuit of these 'ideals' they were extremely radical and ruthless in their means.<sup>108</sup> More than anything else it was this radicalism that made the Nazis distinct from other *völkisch* groups and attracted

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<sup>103</sup> See 'Eine Faschisten-Versammlung in Leipzig', *LVZ*, 27.12.1922.

<sup>104</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Leipzig, 23.12.1922.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> 'Die Nationalsozialisten', *Erzgebirgische Volksfreund*, Nr. 281, 3.12.1922.

<sup>107</sup> BA DH, ZA VI 2029, EK, Polizei-Verhör, 23.12.1922.

<sup>108</sup> Esser said in his speech in Zwickau in late 1921: "Until there are no gallows in the streets at which racketeers and profiteers were hanged, one should not expect any improvements (*ibid.*, Z/C 17411, EK, LPV, Nr. 175, 19.12.1921).

those who were seeking extreme solutions to the problems they faced.<sup>109</sup> Their vision was a movement in which all groups in society would be unified by their desire for justice and pride for the German nation.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> The Nazis in Dresden demanded in a leaflet: The "repeal of the disgraceful dictation of Versailles (*Schanddiktat*), the deportation of all foreigners who immigrated after 2 August 1914 (the district Wiesen and Brühl would look different then, and no more German workers would be living in the *Ostjuden* huts in the Hausenstraße). Banning of unearned income, breaking of the *Zinsknechtschaft*, ruthless fight against mean criminals (*Volksverbrecher*), profiteers, racketeers, etc. (death penalty!) without consideration of confession and race, fight with the law against the political lie and its circulation in the press" (ibid., Halbwochenbericht, 10.4.1923).

<sup>110</sup> Esser said in his speech in Zwickau: "The NSDAP does not want theory, nor a party programme, nor a party dogma, but the unification of all working classes ... to one big National Socialist Party (ibid., *LPV*, Nr. 175, 19.12.1921).

### 3. The NSDAP during the first period of illegality (December 1922-November 1923)

#### (i) Munich/Bavaria

Between July 1921 and the end of 1923 the NSDAP became increasingly militant and pursued the strategy of overthrowing the Republic with an armed rebellion. When Walter Rathenau, the Jewish German Foreign Minister, was assassinated by right-wing fanatics in June 1922, the NSDAP was prohibited in almost every state in Germany by the end of the year. This was not the case in Bavaria where a reactionary government sympathised with the radical right and made it possible for Hitler and the NSDAP to rise in prominence. The putschist activities of right-wing forces in Bavaria culminated in 1923 due to internal developments within the *Reich*: There was the French occupation of the Ruhr, violent agitation of the KPD in central and northern Germany, the Black Reichswehr revolt, separatist activity in the Rhineland, the increasing rift between Berlin and the rightist Bavarian government, and hyper-inflation.<sup>111</sup> These developments and the putsch plans against the government in Berlin largely preoccupied the Nazi leadership in Munich throughout 1923. Munich did not pay great attention to the development of the Nazi movement outside Bavaria during that time.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Stachura, 'Strategy', p. 266.

<sup>112</sup> E.g. see Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 33.

(ii) The banned NSDAP in Saxony

The police in Dresden reported in December 1922 that "the main reason for the uneasy political atmosphere in Saxony is the National Socialist Workers' movement in Bavaria and its spread to western Saxony."<sup>113</sup> The increasing Nazi activities and the extreme radicalism they propagated led the SPD government in Dresden to ban all NSDAP meetings and parades in Saxony on 23.12.1922.<sup>114</sup> Henceforth, the Saxon police closely watched all Nazi activities and dissolved a number of illegal meetings.<sup>115</sup> How did the Saxon Nazis react to the ban? First of all, the ban was not enforced vigorously by all the police, particularly in the south-west of Saxony. The head of the police in Dresden complained that his colleagues in Zwickau and Plauen had failed to dissolve various Nazi meetings.<sup>116</sup> The Nazis later on claimed that they cleverly avoided the dissolving of their meetings during this phase by calling them 'meetings for invited guests only'.<sup>117</sup> However, often only a lenient or even sympathetic police<sup>118</sup>, or the police officers' problems of interpreting the meeting ban, made this possible. When the Nazis in Zwickau met under the new name '*Lesergemeinschaft Deutscher*

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<sup>113</sup> BA DH, Z/A VI 2029, EK, PP Dresden an MdI, 9.12.1922.

<sup>114</sup> It is noteworthy that the NSDAP had already been banned in Prussia since 15.11.1922 (Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 24).

<sup>115</sup> The police dissolved a secret Nazi meeting in Freiberg in January 1923 and various illegal NSDAP meetings in Leipzig (STA D, AH Glauchau, Nr. 24, p. 12; BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK).

<sup>116</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, PP Dresden an Bezirksstellen, 16.1.1923.

<sup>117</sup> *Das nationalsozialistische Sachsen* (Dresden, 1934), p. 64.

<sup>118</sup> The Nazis in Markneukirchen reflected: "The police showed a lot of sympathy for the *völkisch* movement. They arranged house-searches in a way, that it was possible to get documents and membership cards into a safe place beforehand" (*NSDAP Markneukirchen*, p. 17). A Nazi from Zwickau stated: "There were more house-searches than one would have liked. To the honour of the officials it must be said though, that they found nothing. Even at that time there were already police officers who loved their Germany more than the Republic of Weimar" (Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', p. 235). Also see Böhnke *Ruhrgebiet*, pp. 55-57.

*Zeitungen*' in March 1923, the police realised very well that this was in breach of the meeting ban, "but it was so skilfully organised, that a concrete legal basis for police intervention did not exist."<sup>119</sup> Additionally, even tough police surveillance, as in Leipzig, could never completely monitor the flexible and secretive Nazi activities.<sup>120</sup> Even house searches and arrests were not able to curtail much of the Nazi activities. In some cases they made Nazis even more determined to carry on. Although Hans Förster, the leader of the NSDAP in Leipzig, was questioned several times by the police because he had organised illegal meetings, Förster simply continued his activities. The fact that the police dissolved a meeting of fifty Nazis in Leipzig in early March 1923 and registered all names did not hinder the former from meeting again illegally only eight days later.<sup>121</sup>

The Nazis' stubborn continuation of their pursuits shows their complete lack of identification with and integration in the Republic. Their defiance of its laws and regulations tied them together, and it was regarded as treason and a sign of weakness to give in to police pressure and obey the law. If police surveillance made further official meetings impossible, the Nazis met for a beer at the *Stammtisch* (regulars' table in a pub). Anyone who rejected the party due to the government ban was regarded as coward.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, 'NS Sachsen', p. 4. When the police in Zwickau also tried to ban NSDAP membership meetings, Tittmann successfully protested to the KH which ruled: "Because the organisation as such is not banned, informal membership meetings ... cannot be regarded as falling under the ban" (Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', p. 232).

<sup>120</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, 'NS Sachsen', p. 16.

<sup>121</sup> See 'Das Werden und Wachsen der NSDAP in Leipzig', *LNN*, Nr. 155/156, 4/5.6.1933.

<sup>122</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, 'NS Sachsen', p. 6.



As a consequence of the continuous Nazi activities despite the meeting ban, the newly elected left-wing SPD Prime Minister, Erich Zeigner, banned the party itself in Saxony on 24.3.1923.<sup>123</sup> Even this complete ban did not decisively curtail Nazi activities. Nazis in Chemnitz continued openly to distribute leaflets in the town and district throughout the summer<sup>124</sup>; Nazis in Leipzig continued to hold meetings despite the risk of being imprisoned<sup>125</sup>; Nazis in Dresden carried out a smear campaign against the Jews with leaflets in various districts of the town<sup>126</sup>; the police in Zwickau concluded after several house searches: "The movement of the NSDAP has not come to a halt despite its ban and dissolution"<sup>127</sup>, and Nazis in Zittau distributed leaflets in early October that year.<sup>128</sup> The distribution of leaflets and the putting up of posters was the most important propaganda activity during the ban.<sup>129</sup> The Saxon Nazis even continued to establish new party branches outside their urban strongholds.<sup>130</sup> When the police successfully raided the Nazi propaganda centre in Chemnitz and confiscated "valuable material" in October 1923, the Nazis seemed to recover quickly from such a set-back.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., EK. The complete ban of the NSDAP was a result of the strengthening of the left-wing within the SPD government who favoured tougher action against the radical right.

<sup>124</sup> STA D, AH Glauchau, Nr. 24.

<sup>125</sup> Eighteen Nazis had to appear in court in Leipzig in May 1924 for offence against the NSDAP ban from March that year (STA D, S StKa, Nr. 134, Bezirk Leipzig, 23.5.1924).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., Nr. 128, Dresden, 7.10.1923.

<sup>127</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Polizei-Report, 13.4.1923.

<sup>128</sup> STA D, S StKa, Nr. 128, Zittau 9.10.1923.

<sup>129</sup> Similar to Lower Saxony, in Saxony too "the pamphlets were aimed at the middle class, but above all at the workers. They were violently anti-Semitic" (Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 18).

<sup>130</sup> The Zwickau Nazis' founded a party branch in Reinsdorf in April 1923, and their colleagues from Plauen founded a branch in Elsterberg in August 1923 (Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', pp. 235, 244).

<sup>131</sup> STA D, S StKa, Nr. 128, Chemnitz, 17.10.1923.

Despite all the official 'harassment', the judiciary was often rather lenient against Nazi offenders.<sup>132</sup> Additionally, as in other parts of Germany, the Saxon Nazis were extremely flexible in going undercover in an endless number of clubs they founded, making it hard for the police to intervene and keep them in check.<sup>133</sup> More generally, despite the government's surveillance on activities of the *völkisch* movement, its sympathizers continued to meet at right-wing celebrations in 1923.

(iii) The unifying experiences of Saxon Nazis: (in)voluntary 'outcasts' of society and ghetto existence

During 1923 the Nazi movement in Saxony was extremely small, divided, and did not possess a central and efficient structure of party organisation. The members of the roughly twenty-seven party branches and bases (*Stützpunkte*) were linked together by the common experience of radical *völkisch* feelings. This *völkisch* milieu met at *Deutsche Tage*, or commemorations for the victims of the First World War, past glorious battles, or the foundation of the German Empire in early 1871. The Saxon Nazis kept close contact with like-minded people in other parts of the country. Some visited the *Deutscher Tag* in Coburg on 14. October 1922, and many went to the *Deutscher Tag* in Hof in September 1923. It is noteworthy how many local activists participated at the German Gymnastic

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<sup>132</sup> Eighteen Nazis had to appear in court in Leipzig in May 1924 for offences against the NSDAP ban from March that year. One was acquitted, one sentenced to three months imprisonment, and sixteen were sentenced to three months imprisonment and a fine of fifteen *Reichsmark*. However, all those sentenced were granted a suspended sentence for three years, as the court attested them carelessness and juvenile inexperience (*ibid.*, Nr. 134, Bezirk Leipzig, 23.5.1924).

<sup>133</sup> E.g. in Markneukirchen the Nazis continued to meet in the rambling club 'Harmonia' (*NSDAP Markneukirchen*, p. 17).

Festival in Munich in 1923 and came across the Nazi movement on this occasion (see Table 1) These occasions, when these 'outsiders' of the existing political system were able to share the companionship of many people with the same feeling, unified them in their radical right-wing beliefs and their opposition to the Republic. The unifying force of Adolf Hitler, who became the prime rallying point for most party members after 1925, is difficult to assess. It is true that Hitler was not mentioned at all during the first public meetings, and few members had seen him before 1925. However, most hard-core activists had already seen him in Munich or Hof before he was imprisoned at the end of 1923 and were left with an everlasting impression.

Suppression of their beliefs and activities, and most of all comradeship<sup>134</sup>, bound the Nazis together. The Saxon Nazis faced continuous police surveillance and the permanent threat of house searches or even imprisonment. Six Nazis were imprisoned after a field exercise of the SA in the *Erzgebirge* in May 1923, and several Saxon Nazis were imprisoned after the failed Hitler Putsch. However, the Nazis also faced continuous pressure from the left-wing working-class in Saxony. This pushed them even more into the role of an 'outcast' in Weimar society, increased the strains on the Nazis and made their life rather dangerous. When the murder of the *Reich* foreign minister Rathenau by right-wing radicals in June 1922 caused angry reaction from the working-class movement, the Nazis in Zwickau were forced to hide for three days in a nearby forest, and NSDAP members were thrown out of

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<sup>134</sup> E.g. see the account by Bennecke, a former SA leader in Saxony (BA, Kleine Erwerbungen Nr. 569: H. Bennecke, 'Die SA in Sachsen vor der "Machtübernahme"', p. 22).

work.<sup>135</sup> Social Democrats, but particularly Communists, disrupted or even broke up Nazi meetings, often beating up the visitors, and searched members of rightist movements for weapons. The first room-brawl between Nazis and workers in Chemnitz took place when a large group of Communist builders disrupted a Nazi meeting in January 1923.<sup>136</sup> Following a tip by locals after this incident, police in Chemnitz searched the houses of several Nazis and found weapons.<sup>137</sup> Only mediation prevented several hundred workers from storming the first public Nazi meeting in Plauen in November 1922. Two months later, however, workers did exactly this and brought to an end a similar gathering.<sup>138</sup> When Nazis held a meeting in Werdau, a neighbouring town of Zwickau, in April 1923, "Communists forced their way into the meeting and beat up the National Socialists with clubs and sticks. The police had to intervene, and re-established order."<sup>139</sup>

The opposition from the Left and the threat of meeting-room-brawls led the Saxon Nazis to create Storm-troopers (SA) who could protect their meetings. However, as in other parts of Germany, the Saxon SA was a small force which only existed in a few towns.<sup>140</sup> The growth of the Saxon SA was a slow process, and they were not

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<sup>135</sup> *NSDAP Zwickau*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>136</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, 'NS Sachsen', pp. 9-10.

<sup>137</sup> The police found four revolver, fifty-two cartridges, two daggers, three truncheons and one knuckleduster (*ibid.*).

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>139</sup> STA D, AH Glauchau, Nr. 24, Werdau, 6.4.1923.

<sup>140</sup> It is likely that the SA only existed in Zwickau, Plauen, Markneukirchen, Leipzig, and Dresden before 1925. Only sixty Saxon Storm-troopers rallied at the *Deutscher Tag* in Hof in September 1923 (*Sächsische SA*, p. 27). The SA was still years away from appearing in brown uniforms and marching in columns. In Hof the Saxon SA appeared in "belt, windcheater, and black stick" (*NSDAP Zwickau*, p. 12).

able to take on the working-class parties for domination of the streets before the early 1930s.<sup>141</sup>

House searches and the intimidation of Nazis increased after an agreement between the left-wing SPD government and the Communist Party led to the great expansion of the *Proletarischen Hundertschaften* from March 1923 onwards. The Nazis were not only 'threatened' by militant workers when they held meetings or parades, but by all kinds of activities which aroused the suspicion of radical members of the Marxist parties. Tensions came to a head when local Nazis and other activists of the radical right visited the *Deutscher Tag* in Hof in mid-September 1923. It is not by chance that this celebration of the radical right, which constituted the largest meeting of Saxon Nazis at the time, did not take place in Saxony but in neighbouring Bavaria where the right wing movement was not pressurized by the government or *Proletarische Hundertschaften*. In Plauen the police complained that the *Hundertschaften* carried out identity checks and searches among those who returned from the celebration in Hof.<sup>142</sup> Other Nazis who came back from the same nationalist celebration were beaten up by workers upon their arrival in their home towns.<sup>143</sup>

As in other parts of Germany<sup>144</sup>, restrictions imposed by the government together with the active opposition from the organised working class, made it difficult for the Saxon Nazis to spread their ideas and win new members after 1922. However, the local Nazis continued their activities even during these 'difficult'

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<sup>141</sup> See a similar account in Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 48.

<sup>142</sup> STA D, SäStKa, Nr. 128, Plauen.

<sup>143</sup> E.g. six Nazis were beaten up by workers in Klingenthal when they returned from Hof (ibid., Klingenthal).

<sup>144</sup> Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 53; Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, pp. 28-29.

circumstances.<sup>145</sup> More important, the experience of 'repression' tied this small nucleus of 'first-hour' Nazi activists together and made them ready to propagate with relentless energy their hatred of the existing political system and their own vision of society after the party was re-founded in 1925.

(iv) Structure and organisation of the NSDAP in Saxony in 1923

As in other regions outside Bavaria, the Saxon NSDAP was still a small and loose movement lacking a centrally organised party structure in 1923.<sup>146</sup> There were only ten NSDAP party branches and sixteen bases with several hundred members scattered in the western part of the state in early 1923.<sup>147</sup> The Saxon Nazi movement, as in most other regions in Germany, was mainly an urban phenomenon in these early years<sup>148</sup>, and most of its activists came from the middle classes<sup>149</sup>. The local Nazis met once a week

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<sup>145</sup> Bennecke argued that the party bans in Germany had little impact on the development of the NSDAP outside Bavaria before November 1923: "The groups were still small and were normally able to go undercover in other *völkisch* groups or founded new ones. Only the public propaganda ... was limited" (Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 18).

<sup>146</sup> In the *Ruhrgebiet* "there were only some few local branches, bases and scattered single members, who only rarely knew something concrete about each other and probably did not account for more than 500 persons" at the beginning of 1923 (Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 54).

<sup>147</sup> The NSDAP branches were: Zwickau, Chemnitz, Markneukirchen, Plauen, Dresden, Leipzig, Meißen, Freiberg, Aue, Werdau, and Weida in Thuringia. The NSDAP had bases in Mittweida, Radebeul, Adorf, Eibenstock, Klingenthal, Falkenstein, Schneeberg, Schwarzenberg, Schandau, Gottleuba, Hohenstein-Ernstthal, Niederschlema, Neumark, Wilkau, Lößnitz, and Zwönitz (BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Zwickau, 23.3.1923).

<sup>148</sup> This remained so until the late 1920s. One indication for this was that the NSDAP only won 4,455 out of its 19,549 votes (22.8 per cent) in places with less than 10,000 citizens in the municipal elections in 1926 (*StJbSa*, (1927/28)).

<sup>149</sup> E.g. the forty-five people who attended an NSDAP meeting in Leipzig in early 1923 came from the middle classes (except two workers) (BA DH, EK), and twenty-seven early NSDAP supporters from Meißen and Radeburg were

in a pub (*Versammlungslokal*).<sup>150</sup> A common strategy of the different branches did not exist yet. Only Tittmann made frequent visits to Munich to inform himself about the latest strategies.<sup>151</sup> The most important factors explaining the presence or non-presence of NSDAP branches before 1930 were to be found in social, cultural, and economic conditions. It also depended on the presence of devoted and active leaders.<sup>152</sup>

The Nazi districts coincided roughly with the largest administrative units in the area, the *Kreishauptmannschaften*. The KH Chemnitz and Zwickau were the heart of the movement and were loosely controlled by Tittmann. Several reasons help to explain why the Erzgebirge/Vogtland area became the earliest Nazi stronghold in Saxony. First, socio-economic factors made sectors of the population receptive to extreme right-wing ideas.<sup>153</sup> The closeness of southwestern Saxony to Munich and Bavaria was critical.<sup>154</sup> The neighbourhood automatically fostered contacts between Nazis who lived in the border area of both states, and Bavaria was a 'safe haven' for the Saxon Nazis from persecution from the Saxon state or the intimidation of the highly active working class. Furthermore, the Nazis were able to move into a 'vacuum' regarding the

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farmers, employers or workmen (*Sächsische Staatszeitung*, Nr. 237, 10.10.1923).

<sup>150</sup> E.g. the Nazis in Plauen met every Wednesday at 6.30 p.m. in their local pub (BA DH, Z/A VI 2029, PP Dresden an Mdl, 9.12.1922).

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, Z/C 17411, EK, 'NS Sachsen'. The loose relationship of the NSDAP branches with Munich was similar in other parts of Germany (Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 27).

<sup>152</sup> Bennecke suggested the following analysis: "The development of National Socialist branches did not take place according to a plan before 1930, but depended on local conditions. If there were no suitable people for the development of the organisation, the areas were not sufficiently worked on or even completely neglected" (Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 14).

<sup>153</sup> See the discussion about the earliest NSDAP branches above, and Part II.

<sup>154</sup> Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 17.

existence of political parties on the far-right in the south-west of Saxony in the early 1920s. It is true that there were many organisations of the *völkisch* movement, but political parties, particularly the DVFP, did not have a strong presence in the region. The eastern part of Saxony, the region around the towns of Kamenz, Bautzen, Löbau and Zittau - in sharp contrast to the south-western part of the state - not only remained more or less untouched by early Nazi efforts, but continued to be an area of comparative wilderness for the movement until Hitler came to power. The lack of Nazi infiltration in the first half of the 1920s can be partly explained by its location. Not only was the region furthest away from Bavaria, but also from the cradle of the Saxon Nazi movement, the south-west. The party was still extremely small and badly organised, and to some extent chance played a role in these early years.<sup>155</sup> More generally, however, particular socio-economic features made it difficult for the Nazis to gain a foothold in the region. The percentage of Catholics was higher than anywhere else in Saxony.<sup>156</sup> This Catholic minority supported the Centre Party throughout the years of the Republic. Moreover, there was the existence of a liberal-bourgeois milieu especially in and around Zittau. The combined Catholic, liberal-bourgeois and working-class milieu in the area stood firm against serious Nazi infiltration until the end of the Republic.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Böhnke's assessment of the lack of Nazi infiltration into the *rheinisch* region of the Ruhrgebiet in these years is similar (Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 53).

<sup>156</sup> 9.3 per cent of the population were Catholics in the KH Bautzen. This compared to 3.0 per cent Catholics in the rest of Saxony (*StJbSa*, (1924/1926)).

<sup>157</sup> See also F. Walter, 'Sachsen - Ein Stammland der Sozialdemokratie', *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 32 (2) (1991), pp. 207-231.



In the KH Leipzig and the western part of the KH Dresden a few Nazi activities started in late 1922. However, even there, the Nazi movement remained very small and insignificant in comparison to the region of the Erzgebirge/Vogtland until the early 1930s. This can be explained by competition from other *völkisch* organisations, but particularly the great strength of the traditional working-class parties in the area. On the whole, the land north of the line Plauen-Zwickau-Mittweida-Meißen-Dresden remained 'underdeveloped', from the Nazi point of view, before 1930.

The first attempt to organise the few Nazi activists in the KHs Leipzig and Dresden was made from activists in Meißen, who called for a Nazi leadership meeting of north-west and east Saxony in Döbeln on 3 March 1923. It is noticeable that their colleagues from the KHs Chemnitz and Zwickau were not present. Probably they had not been invited as the Nazis in the north-west and east Saxony tried to avoid domination by the older and larger branches in the south-west. Even without them, most were not willing to cede any kind of independence and rejected the creation of a leadership for Saxony (*Landesleitung*). Förster, the leader of Leipzig, and others, also rejected the wish of some to work closely with the DVFP which some suggested would be a powerful ally and could prove useful in case of a party ban. Förster was confident that the NSDAP could look after itself and could work underground if necessary.<sup>158</sup> Shortly after this meeting the Nazis in Zwickau attempted to seize the initiative by overcoming the loose party

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<sup>158</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Polizei-Verhör von Förster, 11.5.1923. Throughout Germany there were bitter disputes amongst Nazis about whether to join the DVFP or to remain independent. In March 1923 Hitler accepted that Nazi members could join the DVFP while the NSDAP was banned. The decision was made easier as the NSDAP was still very weak in the north, the main area of activity of the DVFP (Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 65).

organisation and introducing central control in the whole of Saxony. After consultation with Munich, they invited representatives from all Saxon NSDAP branches and bases to a leadership meeting in Zwickau on 1 April 1923.<sup>159</sup> However, the ban for the NSDAP on 23 March shattered these plans. Instead of discussing the centralization of the movement, Tittmann spoke about how to behave in times of unrest.<sup>160</sup> This was obviously already in preparation for a planned coup attempt in Munich.

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<sup>159</sup> BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Zwickau, 23.3.1923.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., Polizei-Verhör von Förster, 11.5.1923.

#### 4. The failed Hitler Putsch in November 1923

##### (i) Munich/Bavaria

Meanwhile, Hitler had become leader of the *Kampfbund*, which coordinated the activities of the NSDAP and other right-wing paramilitary groups in Bavaria. The *Kampfbund* and the Bavarian government were increasingly determined to topple the national government in Berlin. The idea was to march on Berlin along the lines of Mussolini's 'March on Rome'. Noakes and Pridham argued that they used "the excuse of the need to crush the left-wing governments in Thuringia and Saxony which lay between Bavaria and Berlin. They hoped to coordinate action with right-wing groups in north Germany and in particular the Army."<sup>161</sup> However, when the *Reich* government ordered the Army to remove the left wing governments in Saxony and Thuringia from office in October 1923, the Bavarian authorities and the Army commander von Seeckt became hesitant regarding the coup plans.<sup>162</sup> Hitler, who was under pressure from the enormous expectations he had built up among his followers, decided to risk a coup in Munich. The attempted Putsch in the *Bürgerbräukeller* on 8 November 1923, collapsed the following day. Hitler and other leaders of the putsch were arrested and the Nazi Party was banned.

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<sup>161</sup> J. Noakes and G. Pridham (eds.), *A Documentary Reader. Nazism 1919-1945. 1: The Rise to Power 1919-1934* (Exeter, 1983), p. 27.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

(ii) **The Nazis in Saxony and the attempted Hitler *Putsch***

The Saxon Nazis, as party activists in other parts of Germany<sup>163</sup>, were integrated in Hitler's preparations for a putsch against the government in Berlin. The Saxon Nazis never gave up their propaganda activities even after the party ban in March 1923. However, Tittmann increasingly concentrated on the military training of the local SA to be able to support his Bavarian colleagues during a possible right-wing coup.<sup>164</sup>

The Saxon Nazis carried through several military exercises in the Erzgebirge during this time. About a hundred party members from Zwickau and Markneukirchen participated at a night exercise near Aue at the end of April.<sup>165</sup> The Nazis exercised again in the Erzgebirge in mid-May. This time they tried to get all members of the Saxon SA together. About 120 Storm-troopers from Zwickau, Chemnitz, Aue, Markneukirchen, Schlema, Lugau-Ölsnitz, Mittweida and Annaberg participated. The SA from Freiberg, Meißen and Leipzig did not turn up although they had confirmed their coming. Nearly all of the participants were between sixteen and twenty years old. What was noticeable was the "blind subordination" towards Tittmann, "although Tittmann continuously gave wrong commands and caused confusion due to his low voice."<sup>166</sup> Overall, the exercises showed how seriously the Saxon Nazis tried to

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<sup>163</sup> E.g. the Nazis in Hanover and Göttingen (Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, pp. 38-40).

<sup>164</sup> In May 1925 the Saxon police reported on Nazi activities: According to "reliable sources ... Bavaria ordered the Saxon leadership to set up two heavy gun divisions. If needed, heavy guns will be brought in by lorries from Bavaria ... It was put forward in a leadership meeting, that henceforth the NSDAP is led strictly along military lines" (BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, PP Dresden, 11.5.1923).

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., Bericht über NSDAP, Blatt 201.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., Blatt 203. A police officer had disguisedly participated in the exercise. When it ended the police took six participants into custody (STA D, AH Glauchau, Nr. 24, p. 15).

prepare themselves for an eventual coup in Bavaria, and the extent of the coordination between the local Nazis and the leadership in Munich.<sup>167</sup> At the same time, however, it became evident how small the number of Nazi activists was, how limited their ability to mobilize their support was, and how unprofessionally everything was done.<sup>168</sup>

After consultation with Munich, the Nazis moved the headquarters of Saxony and Thuringia to nearby Hof in Bavaria at the end of September 1923, and Tittmann became SA leader of Saxony, Thuringia and Upper-Franconia.<sup>169</sup> Not only were they banned and closely watched by the police and *Proletarische Hundertschaften* in both states, but the closeness of Hof to the Bavarian capital also made the coup preparations much easier. A coup seemed imminent and the tensions were clearly building up.<sup>170</sup> After president Ebert declared a state of emergency on 26 September 1923 and Hitler started to rally his forces in Munich, Storm-troopers from Zwickau and Werdau also went to Munich.<sup>171</sup> The plan for the remaining Saxon Storm-troopers was to wait at home or local meeting places

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<sup>167</sup> Tittmann said in a speech during the exercise: "Bavaria might call upon the local Storm-troopers soon." He advised all his Storm-troopers to purchase bread boxes, *Leibriemen* and small *Schanzzeug* and other things in preparation for this. Tittmann also expressed the hope that many of the Saxon Storm-troopers would participate in a divisional exercise which would take place in Munich several weeks later (BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Bericht über NSDAP, Blatt 199-200).

<sup>168</sup> This became again evident when some Saxon Storm-troopers, who were trained near Hof in early November, were forced to return home because of food shortages (Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', p. 262).

<sup>169</sup> NSDAP Zwickau, p. 12.

<sup>170</sup> Reports in the press frequently mentioned the dangers of a coup attempt in Bavaria, and the police repeatedly found weapons and military plans during house searches of Nazi activists (STA D, S  StKa, Nr. 128, Zwickau, 9.11.1923).

<sup>171</sup> Of the sixteen Nazis who died during the attempted Hitler Putsch in Munich, two came from Saxony (FK, 9.3.1939). For the following discussion see Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', pp. 259 ff.

for the orders to travel to Haidt, and then go forward together to assist Hitler in Munich. The Saxon Nazis acted according to the plan, but the sudden failure of the Hitler Putsch prevented their active involvement in Bavaria. Several of the Saxon Storm-troopers who had stayed in Hof were taken in custody by the police when they came back to their home towns after the putsch had collapsed. Other Nazis were imprisoned due to their local activities.<sup>172</sup> Overall, there were only a few, probably less than 150 activists, involved in all these developments. The first episode of the Nazi movement ended in a fiasco throughout Germany. Moreover, only an extremely tiny section of the local population identified with the radical aims of the Nazi movement; the majority rejected Hitler's Putsch attempt.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> E.g. Nazis from Freiberg were imprisoned when they came back from Hof (*NSDAP Freiberg*, p. 6), and the local Nazi leader in Chemnitz was taken into custody (*NSDAP Chemnitz*, p. 19).

<sup>173</sup> STA D, SäStKa, Nr. 128, p. 4.

## 5. The NSDAP during the second period of illegality (November 1923 until January 1925)

### (i) Bavaria/Germany

Hitler's assumption of responsibility for the Putsch during the highly publicised trial for high treason in early 1924 made him a hero of the *völkisch* movement in Germany. This ensured that many supporters of the radical right looked to Hitler as the leader they would wait for. However, the lack of his leadership during his imprisonment led the banned NSDAP to disintegrate into rival factions in 1924. Most of the former Nazi activists joined the electoral alliance between the NSDAP and the DVFP during the *Reichstag* elections in May and December 1924.<sup>174</sup> During the first election they formed the VSB, and then they merged to form the NSFB in the second election. The DVFP clearly dominated the election alliances in 1924: There were only nine Nazis among the thirty-two candidates elected to the *Reichstag* in May 1924, and only four Nazis out of fourteen elected in December that year.<sup>175</sup> While the NSDAP was mainly supported by members of the lower middle classes, the DVFP also recruited many of its activists from the former ruling classes and the higher middle classes. This explains why the alliance with the DVFP was bitterly resisted by some former Nazis, "particularly young people, who considered the party too bourgeois in its social composition and political style."<sup>176</sup> The union between both parties came to an abrupt end when Hitler

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<sup>174</sup> The DVFP was an extreme anti-Semitic party. It was founded by former leading members of the DNVP in December 1922 because of their dissatisfaction with their party's lack of extreme racist policies (Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 29).

<sup>175</sup> Falter, *Wahlen*, p. 43.

<sup>176</sup> Noakes/Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 36.

was released from prison shortly after the December elections. He took his followers out of the alliance and started to re-build the NSDAP in early 1925. The leadership of the DVFP re-founded their party under the new name *Deutsch-Völkische Freiheitsbewegung* (DVFB).

(ii) The Saxon Nazis during Hitler's imprisonment: the development of the NSDAP in Saxony and its relations to other right-wing parties

How did the Saxon Nazis react to the new party ban and Hitler's imprisonment? The NSDAP organisation itself disintegrated. Only a tiny number of hard-core Nazi activists, mainly Storm-troopers, stayed together, and continued in their attempts to spread Nazi ideas.<sup>177</sup> The SA went undercover in the *Frontbann*.<sup>178</sup> It is important to recall what Noakes rightly emphasized about the situation of the *völkisch* movement in Germany at the time: "In this early period there did not exist the disciplined parties within the *völkisch* movement which were to emerge after 1925. The situation was exceptionally fluid and confused ... It was only after 1925 that Hitler was successful in overcoming this multiple membership of *völkisch* organizations, in order to create a disciplined party."<sup>179</sup> This was true in Saxony too where the *völkisch* movement and all forces on the right, were split into

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<sup>177</sup> The Nazis in Markneukirchen and Chemnitz were active during 1924 (NSDAP Markneukirchen, pp. 19-22; NSDAP Chemnitz, p. 20), and in south-western Saxony the Nazis started to build up an own newspaper, 'Der Streiter' (Der Gau Sachsen, (1938), p. XVI). In Freiberg, however, only "a tiny number" of Storm-troopers remained in touch and carried out walks in the neighbourhood (NSDAP Freiberg, p. 14).

<sup>178</sup> Sächsische SA, p. 28. The *Frontbann* was a paramilitary organisation which was created by Röhm with former Free Corps and Army comrades in 1922 (K. D. Bracher, *The Nazi Dictatorship* (Middlesex, 1985), p. 170).

<sup>179</sup> Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 25.



many different groups and organisations which often overlapped, but also competed against each other.<sup>180</sup> The *völkisch* movement in Saxony only united in a fragile alliance when the situation desperately needed it during election campaigns.<sup>181</sup>

Above, we have already noted the wide-ranging contacts between Nazis and right-wing paramilitary organisations. Some members of other paramilitary organisations even participated at SA exercises.<sup>182</sup> As in other regions in Germany, the relationship of the Saxon Nazis with other parties of the radical right varied from co-operation to rivalry and competition. On the local level, much more than on the provincial level, co-operation occurred frequently. The lack of a tight and central party structure, and the pressure from the Marxist governments in Saxony and the strong organised working-class movement pulled together local supporters of *völkisch* groups.<sup>183</sup> The *Deutschsozialistische Partei* (DsP) had already lost its influence in the region by mid-1922.<sup>184</sup> Whereas

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<sup>180</sup> Examples were the DSP's opposition to the VSB, or when in July 1924 opposition forces within the DVFP under Dr. Gronau split away from the VSB in eastern Saxony and called themselves '*Nationalsozialistische Freiheitspartei Ostsachsens*'. Overall there were four different groups amongst the *völkisch* political parties in Saxony at the time ('Vier völkische Richtungen in Sachsen', *Meißner Tageblatt*, Nr. 160, 10.7.1924).

<sup>181</sup> E.g. before the December 1924 *Reichstag* elections (see 'Zusammenschluß der völkischen Gruppen in Sachsen', *Dresdner Nachrichten*, Nr. 455, 3.11.24).

<sup>182</sup> E.g. seven former members of the *Deutschnationaler Jugendbund* in Chemnitz and members of the *Jungdo* participated at the SA exercises in May 1923 (BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, Bericht über NSDAP; *Zwickauer Tageblatt und Anzeiger*, 22.2.1924).

<sup>183</sup> E.g. the *Stahlhelm* leader Wagner in Leipzig organised that members of the *Stahlhelm*, NSDAP and other supporters of *völkisch* groups attended a consecration of a flag (Stoschek, 'Entwicklung', p. 269).

<sup>184</sup> The DsP, similar to the DAP, had been founded in order to win over the organized working class for the *völkisch* movement. Julius Streicher's defection to the NSDAP in October 1922 lead to the final dissolution of the party (D. Fricke (Hrsg.), *Lexikon zur Parteiengeschichte. Die bürgerlichen und kleinbürgerlichen Parteien und Verbände in Deutschland (1789-1945)*, Band 2 (Leipzig, 1984), p. 548).

the Saxon Nazis, as in the rest of the Republic, co-operated on many occasions with the DVFP, their relation with the *Deutschsoziale Partei* (DtsP) was much more determined by rivalry.<sup>185</sup> The DtsP did not join the *völkisch* alliance between DVFP and NSDAP during the elections to the *Reichstag* in 1924, and NSDAP and DtsP fought hard to attract the others supporters.<sup>186</sup> Overall, however, the DtsP only proved to be a serious competitor for the NSDAP in the towns of Dresden and Leipzig.<sup>187</sup>

Relations between Saxon Nazis and DVFP were much better. Before the NSDAP was banned in Saxony in March 1923, it was the increasing opinion of Nazis from north-west and east Saxony that they should work more closely together with the DVFP, as the latter would be a powerful ally and could prove useful in case of a party ban.<sup>188</sup> However, the Nazis' intentions became pointless when the DVFP was baned in Saxony too.<sup>189</sup> As in the rest of Germany, the NSDAP and DVFP, but also other *völkisch* groups, allied during the elections to the *Reichstag* in May and December 1924.<sup>190</sup> After the failed Hitler putsch most of the Saxon Nazi activists went under cover in the VSB.<sup>191</sup> In Saxony, in contrast to most other regions, the VSB and NSFB were dominated by local Nazis. The Saxon intelligence service reported in February 1924 that the VSB was

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<sup>185</sup> The DtsP was founded by the extreme anti-Semite Richard Kunze in Berlin in October 1921 (Fricke, *Parteien*, p. 81).

<sup>186</sup> E.g. seventy-five members of the DtsP branch in Marienberg joined the NSDAP in September 1924 (STA D, SÄStKa, Nr. 135, Chemnitz, 25.9.1924).

<sup>187</sup> In November 1923 the Saxon intelligence noted that the DtsP did "not possess a special significance" (BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, *Deutschsoziale Partei*, 15.11.1923).

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, Polizei-Verhör von Förster, 11.5.1923; and Blatt 99-100.

<sup>189</sup> The DVFP was baned in Saxony in early April 1923 (STA D, AH Glauchau, Nr. 24, PP Chemnitz, 4.4.1923).

<sup>190</sup> E.g. the DVSTB and *Deutscher Herold* joined the VSB in the KH Leipzig (*ibid.*, SÄStKa, Nr. 134, Leipzig, 27.5.1924).

<sup>191</sup> See 'Ein Leben für Deutschland', FK, 9.3.1939.

more or less identical with the former NSDAP.<sup>192</sup> This was certainly true for most of Saxony, as two of the three election lists of the VSB and DVFP were headed by Nazis. Only in the KH Leipzig, where the DVFP had more influence than the NSDAP, a candidate of the former party was heading the election list.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, the leadership of the Saxon VSB and NSFB were held by Nazis (first by Tittmann, then by Mutschmann). At the *Deutscher Tag* in Plauen in October 1924 and other similar events, the Saxon Nazis vowed their loyalty to Hitler.<sup>194</sup>

Table 2 shows that the *völkisch* alliances did not do well in both *Reichstag* elections. In May it was 0.1 per cent above the average

Table 2: Election results of *völkisch* parties in Saxony in the mid-1920s

electoral districts	RW 1924 I		RW 1924 II	
	VSB	DtsP	NSFB	DtsP <sup>1</sup>
Leipzig	55,317 (7.9)	5,561 (0.8)	1,3225 (1.8)	2,126 (0.3)
Dresden	43,807 (4.5)	23,452 (2.4)	1,5153 (1.5)	10,137 (1.0)
Chemnitz	70,717 (7.7)	3,868 (0.4)	3,9205 (4.2)	3,121 (0.3)
Saxony	169,841 (6.6)	32,881 (1.5)	6,7583 (2.3)	15,384 (0.6)
Reich	1,918,329 (6.5)	333,427 (1.1)	90,7915 (3.0)	159,424 (0.5)

electoral districts	LW 1926 (31.10.1926)		RW 1928	
	NSDAP	VSAG	NSDAP	VNB
Leipzig	5,778 (1.7)	3,081 (0.9)	14,601 (1.9)	
Dresden	7,562 (0.9)	5,572 (0.6)	18,245 (1.8)	
Chemnitz	24,385 (2.7)	1,730 (0.2)	41,497 (4.4)	
Saxony	37,725 (1.6)	10,356 (0.4)	74,343 (2.7)	5,549 (0.2)
Reich			810,127 (2.6)	266,370 (0.9)

VSAG (*Völkisch-soziale Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) : DVFB and DtsP; VNB: *Völkisch-nationaler Block*: DVFB and DtsP. 1: DtsP and *Reichsbund für Aufwertung*.

Source: *StJbSa*, (1924/26, 1927/28); Falter, *Wahlen*.

<sup>192</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11130, Politische Abteilung, 8.2.1924.

<sup>193</sup> In the December 1924 *Reichstag* elections Mücke headed the election list of the NSFB in the district of Dresden, and Feder, Tittmann, Walsleben and Blume headed the list in Chemnitz/Zwickau. All of them were Nazis. The DVFP's only candidate with chance of election was Emil Fritsch, who headed the list in Leipzig. He was elected to the *Reichstag* in May 1924. Tittmann was elected for the NSDAP in May, and Feder in December that year.

<sup>194</sup> See 'Ein Häuflein', *FK*, Nr. 143, 24.5.1935.

in the *Reich*, but dropped to 0.7 per cent below the average in December. It is striking that the VSB gained most of its votes in the KH Leipzig in the town of Leipzig itself, whereas its electoral support was much more evenly spread in urban and rural areas in the KHs Chemnitz/Zwickau.<sup>195</sup> Moreover, when one looks closely at some election results at the local level some striking election results for the NSDAP become apparent (see Table 3). The Nazis not only scored astonishing election results far above the national average in the area of the Vogtland in the May elections, but they were also able to keep the election results in these strongholds

Table 3: Percentage of the votes for the VSB and NSFB in some towns and AHs in the electoral district of Chemnitz/Zwickau in the 1924 *Reichstag* elections

	1924I (VSB)	1924II (NSFB)
Plauen	19.0	13.2
Werdau	12.7	4.4
AH Oelsnitz	17.6	11.6
AH Plauen	16.8	10.2

Source: *StDR*, (1924, Band 315).

above the 10 per cent mark in December. The Nazis were able to mobilize voters in towns like Plauen and Werdau as well as in the AHs Oelsnitz and Plauen. The area of the Vogtland, an extremely industrialised region which was dominated by small and medium scale textile industry, was a stronghold of the *völkisch* movement.<sup>196</sup> This area continued to be the greatest Nazi bastion in

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<sup>195</sup> *StDR*, (1924), Band 315.

<sup>196</sup> A monthly report of the Saxon intelligence service in September 1924 stated: "*Scharnhorstbund, Stahlhelm, Wehrwolf, Jungdo* organised public meetings, like consecration of flags, founding of local branches, exercises in the countryside. The *völkisch* idea is winning ground particularly in western Saxony, mainly in the Vogtland and Erzgebirge" (STA D, SÄStKa, Nr. 135).

Saxony and became one of the greatest NSDAP strongholds in the Republic.

A significant event was Martin Mutschmann's appointment as provincial leader (*Landesleiter*) of the *völkisch* alliance in Saxony in Weimar in August 1924.<sup>197</sup> Mutschmann probably received the post because of his position as established textile manufacturer in Plauen<sup>198</sup> and his determined appearance<sup>199</sup>. He was extremely anti-Semitic<sup>200</sup>, nationalist and worried about his business because of the impact of the First World War and the November Revolution. This watershed signalled Mutschmann's rise as NSDAP leader in the state and the simultaneous emergence of Plauen as Nazi centre in Saxony.

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<sup>197</sup> NSDAP Zwickau, p. 13. He succeeded Tittmann who had occupied the post in the first half of the year. Martin Mutschmann, born on 9.3.1879 in Hirschberg/Saale, was dismissed from the army in December 1916 with the 'Iron Cross' Second Class due to a wound he received in Verdun. He joined the NSDAP in April 1922 (BDC).

<sup>198</sup> Mutschmann owned a lace factory in Plauen since 1907 (Mai 'Mutschmann', p. 21).

<sup>199</sup> Goebbels described him as a "decent, brutal leader" (E. Fröhlich (Hrsg.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels. Sämtliche Fragmente* (München, New York, London, Paris, 1987), 1925 XI 23).

<sup>200</sup> Before he joined the NSDAP Mutschmann was member of the DVSTB. In one of his many extremely anti-Semitic speeches he said in Weimar in June 1931: "The day of reckoning will come and the synagogues will smoke" (*Zum sechzigsten Geburtstag von Gauleiter Mutschmann. Markante Worte von Martin Mutschmann* (Gauverlag, 1939)).

## 6. The NSDAP from its re-founding in 1925 until 1928

### (i) Germany

The importance of the period between 1925 until 1928 for the NSDAP was the creation of an efficient organization and administrative structure which enabled the Nazis to exploit the crisis which began in the late 1920s. The disintegration of the NSDAP during 1924 proved "the indispensability of Hitler to the movement. Without his unifying influence and strong leadership, the somewhat fissiparous NSDAP was a political nonentity."<sup>201</sup> The most crucial consequence of the failed Beerhall Putsch was Hitler's adoption of a new political strategy when he was released in December 1924: Hitler decided to work within the Constitution and attempt to win power through elections. Not only did this allow him to re-found the party again in February 1925, but "the NSDAP's overall character underwent a fundamental change. It ceased being exclusively dependent on an elite of fanatical followers oriented towards putschism. Instead it became more and more after 1925 an evolutionary movement of totalitarian aims, eager for electoral success."<sup>202</sup> The consequences of this new strategy were twofold. First, the organisation of the party changed in order to appeal to the masses. This explains the development of several ancillary NSDAP organisations after 1925. Second, the NSDAP began to develop significantly outside Bavaria.<sup>203</sup> It was in northern, central and eastern parts of the country that the NSDAP made the most progress. After his release Hitler also rejected all future alliances

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<sup>201</sup> Stachura, 'Strategy', p. 267. For the importance of Hitler's leadership among the Nazis in Lower Saxony see Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 58.

<sup>202</sup> Stachura, 'Strategy', p. 268.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

with other *völkisch* groups and continued to build up a strictly authoritarian style of leadership. Everyone who refused to "equate the *völkisch* movement with Hitler as *Führer*" made himself an enemy of the NSDAP.<sup>204</sup>

(ii) The re-founding of the NSDAP in Saxony

The period after 1925 saw the rise of Martin Mutschmann, a loyal Hitler supporter<sup>205</sup>, as the undisputed Nazi leader in Saxony. Hitler officially ordered him to re-build the organisation in Saxony at the end of March<sup>206</sup>, and was full of praise for Mutschmann's work at the annual party meeting in Weimar a year later: "The struggle of last year was difficult, particularly during summer. There were regions where we were able to come out on top right away, especially in Saxony. There the leader Mutschmann has currently taken Saxony into his firm control, brought it united into the NSDAP, and kept it in an exemplary way in his hands so that no counter current could develop."<sup>207</sup> The extremely fragmented Saxon Nazi movement made great progress to become a centralised and efficient party. However, it was a slow process before the NSDAP became the strongest force on the radical right and its influence remained limited to western Saxony. Overall the party was still only a small political force by early 1929. Its main characteristics were its radicalism, and enormous propaganda activities. The number of Nazi districts grew in Saxony and

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<sup>204</sup> Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 59.

<sup>205</sup> Apparently he visited Hitler several times in prison in Landsberg (see 'Ein Häuflein Fanatiker erobert Sachsen', *FK*, Nr. 143, 24.5.1935).

<sup>206</sup> See 'Die NSDAP in Sachsen', *Sachsen*, (2) (1938), p. 2.

<sup>207</sup> *VB*, 26.5.1926.

reflected the continuous growth of the movement. The NSDAP had five districts after the re-organisation in 1925<sup>208</sup>, eight in 1928<sup>209</sup>, nine in 1929, fourteen in the first half of 1930, eighteen in the second half of the year, twenty-one in 1931 and finally one district for each AH.<sup>210</sup>

There was an appeal to former Nazi activists to join the re-founded NSDAP in Saxony in January 1925.<sup>211</sup> The leaders of the Saxon DVFB decided unanimously to join the NSDAP in late February.<sup>212</sup> As in other parts in Germany, there were meetings in which the *völkisch* party locals discussed the political situation and whether to join the NSDAP or DVFB.<sup>213</sup> The groups who joined the NSDAP started to meet again once a week.<sup>214</sup> In contrast to the Nazis in north and western Germany<sup>215</sup>, the Saxon Nazi leaders had no quarrels with the headquarters in Munich, did not voice radical socialist tendencies, and did not condemn participation in elections.<sup>216</sup> Hitler spoke several times in Saxony in 1925<sup>217</sup>, and various prominent Nazi leaders toured the state from the second

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<sup>208</sup> The NSDAP had about 3000 members organised in five districts (each headed by a *Gauleiter*) and thirty-five party branches in autumn 1925 (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, October 1925).

<sup>209</sup> The districts (*Arbeitsgebiete*, or *Unter-Gaue*) were: Vogtland, Zwickau, Chemnitz, Freiberg, Leipzig, Dresden, Bautzen, Zittau (NSfS, Nr. 25, 24.6.1928).

<sup>210</sup> *Der Gau Sachsen*, p. XVII.

<sup>211</sup> See 'Aufruf an die Nationalsozialisten Sachsens!', *Der Streiter*, 17.1.1925.

<sup>212</sup> See 'Die völkischen Sachsens für Hitler', *LNN*, Nr. 56, 25.2.1925.

<sup>213</sup> STA D, SÄStKa, Nr. 134.

<sup>214</sup> See 'Sachsen', *Der Streiter*, Nr. 8, 28.2.1925.

<sup>215</sup> The Nazis in north and western Germany set up a working group in September 1925 which represented an amalgam of "national bolshevik ideas", "elitist racial extremists" (against participation in elections), "the desire to participate in the formation of policy", and a reluctance to confirm to the centralizing tendencies from Munich (Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 84).

<sup>216</sup> E.g. the Nazis in Plauen participated in municipal elections in early 1925.

<sup>217</sup> Hitler spoke in Plauen in June (where he attended a leadership meeting of Saxony) and in Zwickau in July 1925 (STA D, SÄStKa, Nr. 132, Juni-Juli 1925). He was banned to speak in Chemnitz in July (ibid., MdI, Nr. 11126/6, Juli 1925), but gave a short speech in Plauen on the way through in early October 1925 (STA D, SÄStKa, Nr. 132, Oktober 1925).



half of 1925 onwards.<sup>218</sup> The Nazi leadership in Munich paid great attention to the movement in Saxony. An article in a local SPD newspaper which speculated that Hitler would move his headquarters from Munich to Zwickau, shows how much the local

**Table 4:** NSDAP party members in Saxony and the *Reich* (ranking of Saxony among all thirty-two *Gaue* in brackets)<sup>219</sup>

Party entry	Saxony	<i>Reich</i>
before 14.9.1930	11,383 (1)	129,563
between 15.9.1930- 30.1.1933	75,696 (1)	719,446
before 30.1.1933	87,079 (1)	849,009

Source: *NSDAP Parteistatistik 1935*.

**Table 5:** Local NSDAP party branches and bases in Saxony and the *Reich* (ranking of Saxony among all thirty-two *Gaue* in brackets)

year	Saxony	<i>Reich</i>
1923	27 (4)	347
1925	88 (1)	607
1928	132 (1)	1,378
1930	341 (2)	4,964
1932	783 (4)	11,845

Source: *NSDAP Parteistatistik 1935*.

*völkisch* movement was regarded as loyal to Hitler.<sup>220</sup> Indeed, although Saxony was only a middle-size Nazi *Gau*, it had by far the largest population of all Nazi *Gaue* and was ranked between first and fourth of all *Gaue* in terms of the number of party branches and bases before 1933 (see Tables 4 and 5).

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<sup>218</sup> Dinter, Feder, Goebbels, several other Nazi leaders, and particularly G. Strasser, spoke in many different places in Saxony between 1925-26.

<sup>219</sup> Recently Jürgen Falter argued convincingly that the membership figures in the *NSDAP Parteistatistik* are too high as they do not account for the high number of those who left the party (J. F. Falter, 'Die Jungmitglieder der NSDAP zwischen 1925 und 1933. Ein demographisches und soziales Profil', in W. R. Krabbe (Hrsg.), *Politische Jugend in der Weimarer Republik* (Bochum, 1993), p. 209)). The figures, however, are still useful to look at Saxony's standing in the *Reich*.

<sup>220</sup> See 'Hitler will nach Sachsen gehen', *LVZ*, Nr. 147, 27.6.1925.

### (iii) Characteristic features of the Saxon Nazi movement

The most characteristic feature of the Nazi movement after its re-founding was its liveliness. The Nazis were by far the busiest organisation on the radical right, and one of the most active parties from the end of 1925 onwards. In a typical report the police noted in early 1926: "The NSDAP was publicly the most active among all the parties on the right. The Party developed a level of activity, which is only comparable with the KPD."<sup>221</sup> Active Nazi branches organised one internal meeting every week<sup>222</sup>, and set up monthly plans with a schedule of events. Furthermore, Nazis played a prominent role in *völkisch* meetings like *Deutsche Tage* and on other occasions.<sup>223</sup> However, even the Nazis ceased most of their propaganda during the summer vacations<sup>224</sup>, and they were not able to match the output of agitation of other parties during election campaigns until 1928.<sup>225</sup>

Most visitors at Nazi meetings were political enemies until the early 1930s. About two-thirds of all visitors at a Goebbels meeting in Chemnitz were Communists in November 1925.<sup>226</sup> The Nazis often had problems carrying out their programme, or were

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<sup>221</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, April 1926.

<sup>222</sup> E.g. the NSDAP branch in Zwickau met every Thursday for a talk and an internal discussion (NSfS, Nr. 9, 2.5.1926).

<sup>223</sup> E.g. at the *Deutscher Tag* in Aue in May 1925, which was visited by 5400 people and also attended by Ludendorff, there were swastika-flags and pictures of Hitler placed in several windows in the town (STA D, SsStKa, Nr. 131, Aue, 2/3.5.1925).

<sup>224</sup> E.g. the Nazis described it as a great risk to organise a meeting in St. Egidien during the summer vacation in August 1926 (NSfS, Nr. 23, 8.8.1926).

<sup>225</sup> E.g. see the number of public meetings of political parties in the KH Dresden before the 1928 *Reichstag* elections: SPD: 119, KPD: 85, DNVP: 41, DDP: 27, DVP: 25, NSDAP: 18 (STA D, KH Dresden, Nr. 262, Mai 1928).

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., MdI, Nr. 11126/6, November 1925. This was similar in the Ruhr area (Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 122).

sometimes thrown out by political opponents.<sup>227</sup> Nazi meetings frequently ended in meeting-room-brawls as they continued to be visited by Marxist supporters.

It is noteworthy that the official NSDAP newspaper in Saxony, the *Nationale Sozialist für Sachsen* (NSfS) and later the *Sächsischer Beobachter* (SB) were published by the *Kampfverlag* in Berlin.<sup>228</sup> The Saxon Nazis did not possess their own newspaper before they founded *Der Freiheitskampf* (FK) in August 1930. The newspaper was crucial for the growth of the movement. It functioned as a newsletter which announced all events in Saxony, but also provided the activists with information about Nazi ideology and politics.<sup>229</sup> This was important during a time when no sophisticated central leadership existed.

The Saxon Nazis were noticeable for their radical and aggressive propaganda, and did not stick to commonly accepted codes of behaviour in their agitation. The police reported: "There were lively and objective discussions about the Locarno Treaty and the League of Nations in November 1925, except for a few organisations like the NSDAP which launched tasteless attacks against the President."<sup>230</sup> Typical were their warnings of what they would do to their opponents once they were in power.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>227</sup> Communists broke up a Nazi meeting in one of the great venue halls in Leipzig in March 1926 (NSfS, Nr. 8, 25.4.1926).

<sup>228</sup> The NSfS, a weekly newspaper, existed from March 1926 until it was replaced by the SB in January 1929. Its section '*Nachrichten aus Sachsen*' covered the state in one to two pages and it became the official Saxon NSDAP newspaper in October 1927, replacing the *Völkische Nachrichten für Sachsen* (STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, Dezember 1926).

<sup>229</sup> Also see Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 101.

<sup>230</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, November 1925.

<sup>231</sup> The NSfS expressed: "Hopefully God will give us the strength ... to the day, when we will take revenge for all the disgrace one has done to us for ten years ... We will not forget anything!" (NSfS, Nr. 36, 9.9.1928).

extreme anti-Semitism<sup>232</sup>, and physical violence continued to play a crucial part in the local Nazi movement. A Communist was killed at a party rally with Goebbels in Chemnitz, and the police reported that the Nazis in Dresden "systematically disturbed" meetings of the Democrats at the end of 1925.<sup>233</sup> Meeting-room-brawls between Nazis and Communists caused the Saxon Ministry of the Interior to decree preventive measures against increased violence in spring 1926.<sup>234</sup> However, the violence between both groups continued and the Nazis proclaimed repeatedly in public their readiness to "answer Communist terror with even greater terror."<sup>235</sup>

#### (iv) Ancillary organisations of the Saxon NSDAP

Another general phenomenon of the NSDAP was the development of various ancillary NSDAP organisations after 1925. There was the creation of Nazi women's groups<sup>236</sup>, scientific associations<sup>237</sup>, a group for salaried employees<sup>238</sup>, a freedom union

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<sup>232</sup> E.g. members of the SS ambushed Polish Jews in Plauen in October 1926, and the police reported several molestations of Jewish citizens (STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, Oktober 1926). The Nazi branch of Markneukirchen hung up placards with the text 'Death to the Jews' (NSfS, Nr. 25, 24.6.1928).

<sup>233</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, November 1925. In contrast to Saxony, Nazi meetings seemed to be peaceful in the Ruhr area until 1928 (Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 111).

<sup>234</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, April 1926.

<sup>235</sup> NSfS, Nr. 14, 3.4.1927.

<sup>236</sup> The NSDAP women's group (NSF) in Plauen was created in July 1925, and in Döbeln in September 1926 (STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, Juli 1925; NSfS, Nr. 27, 5.9.1926). Elsbeth Zander, leader of the *Deutsche Frauenorden* (DFO), held several meetings in Saxony which led to the creation of several branches of the DFO. The DFO was officially incorporated into the NSDAP in early 1928 (NSfS, Nr. 2, 15.1.1928).

<sup>237</sup> The scientific association of the NSDAP in Dresden organised two talks by Professor Gregor on 14/15.5.1926 (STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, Mai 1926).

<sup>238</sup> The Nazis in Dresden founded a group for salaried employees in March 1927 (NSfS, Nr. 17, 24.4.1927). Leaders and members of the German Nationalist

(*Freiheitsbund*)<sup>239</sup>, organisations to attract the middle classes<sup>240</sup>, and the Saxon students Tempel and Podlich founded the National Socialist Student Association (NSStB) in early 1926<sup>241</sup>. Leipzig was the seat of the NSStB from winter 1926 until Baldur von Schirach succeeded Tempel as *Reich* leader in mid-1928.<sup>242</sup> The Nazis also carried out sport activities<sup>243</sup>, organised nationalist celebrations at the border regions (*Grenzlandtag*)<sup>244</sup>, and the *NSfS* started to cover municipal politics and local art<sup>245</sup>.

One of the earliest and most important ancillary organisations was the *Großdeutsche Jugendbewegung* (GDJB), founded in 1924.<sup>246</sup> The GDJB was led by Kurt Gruber from Plauen, had adopted the "*Führerprinzip*, sworn allegiance to Hitler and acknowledged the *völkisch* idea", but "was still organisationally independent of the

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Commercial Employees' Association turned up to an NSDAP meeting for salaried employees in Leipzig in early 1928 (ibid., Nr. 4, 29.1.1928).

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., Nr. 37, 11.9.1927.

<sup>240</sup> The Nazis reported about the infiltration of apprenticeship unions and guilds, particularly of the baker apprenticeships in Leipzig (ibid., Nr. 39, 30.9.1928).

<sup>241</sup> See A. Faust, *Der Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund. Studenten und Nationalsozialismus in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1973), p. 37.

<sup>242</sup> STA D, MdI, 11126/2, June 1928.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., Nr. 11126/6, Oktober 1926.

<sup>244</sup> E.g. Nazis from Saxony, Thuringia, Bavaria, and the 'suppressed Bohemian brothers' met in September 1928 in Adorf/Vogtland (*NSfS*, Nr. 35, 31.8.1928).

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., Nr. 31, 5.8.1928. The *NSfS* had a frequent column about local theatre and music productions from 1928 onwards (ibid., Nr. 41, 14.10.1928).

<sup>246</sup> The GDJB was a successor of various *völkisch* youth organisations Kurt Gruber had created from 1922 onwards. He had established a branch of the *Jugendbund*, the first NSDAP youth organisation, in Plauen in October 1922. Gruber then was appointed leader of the Saxon *Jugendbund*. The branch in Plauen continued its activities as *Wandersportverein Vogtland* during the time of the party ban in 1923. In 1924, Gruber affiliated his group with Lenk's GDJB. While Lenk's organisation in the south failed within a few months, "Gruber enjoyed considerable success in Saxony." Gruber published a newspaper and "there was a total of fifty-six branches in Saxony, representing 2500 members in December 1924" (P. D. Stachura, *Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic* (Santa Barbara, Oxford, 1975), pp. 13-14).

NSDAP."<sup>247</sup> Until the GDJB was officially absorbed into the NSDAP in summer 1926, Kurt Gruber was anxious to retain independence for his movement, and to remain loyal to the ideas of his youth movement. This explains his unwillingness to be incorporated by Hitler into the *Schilljugend*<sup>248</sup>, and a declaration of the GDJB in which they rejected bourgeois tendencies within the NSDAP in spring 1926.<sup>249</sup> The great success of the Saxon GDJB, which established a widespread organisational network and membership throughout the state and in particular in the Vogtland<sup>250</sup>, had important consequences. First, the Saxon GDJB quickly spread into Mecklenburg, Franconia, the Rhineland, and Rheinpfalz<sup>251</sup>, and became the official NSDAP youth organisation, the Hitler Youth (HJ), in July 1926. Kurt Gruber, who lead the organisation from his headquarter in Plauen, became the first leader of the HJ.<sup>252</sup> Additionally, the strength of the GDJB and later the HJ in Saxony<sup>253</sup>, facilitated and helped the work of the local NSDAP.

It was crucial for the Nazis to be organised among the youth, one of the most active groups in public life during the Weimar Republic.

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-15.

<sup>248</sup> The *Schilljugend* was founded and led by the former member of the *Freikorps* and Röhm friend, Gerhard Roßbach (ibid., p. 16).

<sup>249</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, März 1926. However, Stachura's assessment that the GDJB was the "youth auxiliary of the party in all but the name" in the first half of 1926, seems accurate (Stachura, *Nazi Youth*, p. 16).

<sup>250</sup> In autumn 1925 Gruber claimed that the GDJB's organisational structure was nearly completed. Saxony was divided in five *Gaue* (Dresden, Chemnitz, Zwickau, Vogtland, and Leipzig). Vogtland was the strongest *Gau* with 600 members at the end of 1924 (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, Oktober 1925). The Vogtland was the national centre of Nazi youth organisations at the time (H.-C. Brandenburg, *Die Geschichte der HJ. Wege und Irrwege einer Generation* (Köln, 1982), p. 25.

<sup>251</sup> Stachura, *Nazi Youth*, p. 15.

<sup>252</sup> Brandenburg, *HJ*, pp. 26-29.

<sup>253</sup> The HJ members of Saxony accounted for 10.9 per cent of all HJ members in the *Reich* in early 1931 (1428 out of 13130), and 8.8 per cent in early 1932 (3008 out of 34121). Calculated from Stachura, *Nazi Youth*, Appendix VIII.

The Saxon police reported the repeated participation of youth of all age groups at all political, cultural and sports events in 1925.<sup>254</sup> Many of the local *völkisch* youth organisations sympathized strongly with the NSDAP. The branch of the *Wikingbund* in Zwickau (twenty-four members) declared its unreserved loyalty to Hitler, and members of the *Wehrjugendbund Schill* in Dresden (thirty-six members of age between fourteen and twenty) wore Hitler-jackets and symbols of the NSDAP.<sup>255</sup> Despite the fact that only few members of the organised youth movement sympathized with the NSDAP during the Weimar Republic<sup>256</sup>, and the overall comparatively small size of the GDJB or later HJ in Saxony, the determination and devotion of these hard-core Nazi activists contributed to the enormous propaganda of the local NSDAP. Between 18.-31.10.1928 the NSDAP in the district of Freiberg organised seven meetings which were protected by the SA, and the local HJ organised four meetings and participated at one *Deutscher Tag*.<sup>257</sup>

(v) The development of the SA in Saxony

Due to the failed coup attempt Hitler decided to change the SA from a military formation into a more political one in order to conciliate the army, and have more control for himself.<sup>258</sup> The *Frontbann* had not been replaced by the SA in Saxony by the end of 1925.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, August 1925.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., Juli 1925.

<sup>256</sup> See P. D. Stachura, 'German Youth, the Youth Movement and National Socialism in the Weimar Republic', in P. D. Stachura, *The Nazi Machtergreifung* (London, Boston, Sydney, 1983), pp. 68-84.

<sup>257</sup> NSfS, Nr. 41, 14.10.1928.

<sup>258</sup> Stachura, 'Strategy', pp. 270-271.

<sup>259</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, Oktober 1925.

The Nazis explained that this was due to lack of money. The truth was, however, that the Saxon *Frontbann* had not completely submitted itself to Hitler, as they had declared loyalty to both Hitler and Ludendorff.<sup>260</sup> In early 1926 the leaders of the Saxon *Frontbann* discussed its relationship with the NSDAP and decided to break away immediately if the Nazis created *Schutzstaffeln* disguised as rambling units.<sup>261</sup> In summer 1926, however, the majority of the Saxon *Frontbann* joined the SA<sup>262</sup>, and there was an official call to create SA units in all party branches<sup>263</sup>. The timing of this development was similar in other parts of Germany.<sup>264</sup>

The former Saxon SA leader Bennecke described the sacrifices of time, money and physical exhaustion of the young members of the *Frontbann*, and later SA, in order to attend *völkisch* celebrations and to agitate for the party. He recalled that the most active SA members were young and unmarried. This only changed because of an influx of older unemployed from 1929 onwards. He states that he was the oldest in his unit at twenty-three years of age in Dresden in 1925. The common feelings which held the members of the unit together, were an interest in military affairs and in nature.<sup>265</sup> As in other parts of Germany, "the NSDAP attracted all

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., September 1925, November 1925. The *Frontbann* in Leipzig was split into two factions in November 1925 (ibid.).

<sup>261</sup> The *Frontbann* leaders even declared they would wear a black arm band with a red cross instead the swastika if an SA was created (ibid., Januar 1926).

<sup>262</sup> The majority of the *Frontbann* in Plauen joined the SA in July 1926. All members of the *Frontbann* in Chemnitz joined the local SA in the same month (ibid., Juli 1926). After Röhm disagreed with Hitler on the role of the revived SA (he favoured a military role rather than a political one), he resigned as leader in May 1926.

<sup>263</sup> NSfS, Nr. 25, 22.8.1926.

<sup>264</sup> E.g. the *Frontbann* in Stettin were all enrolled in the NSDAP by mid-1926 (Bessel, *Political Violence*, p. 16).

<sup>265</sup> Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 23.



the most anti-bourgeois elements in the *völkisch* movement - predominantly students, apprentices and young white collar workers."<sup>266</sup> Parallel to the *Frontbann*'s conversion to the SA, the first branches of the SS were founded in Saxony in summer 1926.<sup>267</sup>

The Saxon SA, as in other regions in Germany, grew slowly, and was still a small force in 1929. Bennecke estimates that the SA in the KHS Leipzig and Dresden only had about 600 members each by 1929.<sup>268</sup> Several factors explain this. It was linked with the slow expansion of the party itself, and the existence of other paramilitary organisations. The SA was only one paramilitary organisation among many. According to the Saxon police *Jungdo* and *Stahlhelm* were the strongest organisations on the radical right in mid-1925.<sup>269</sup> Additionally, there was a "boom" in the founding of small organisations on the radical right. Seven new right-wing organisations were founded in September 1925 alone.<sup>270</sup> Most of the members of these paramilitary organisations resisted initial Nazi attempts to attract them. Storm-troopers who tried to win over right wing activists during a meeting of paramilitary organisations in Grimma, were forcefully thrown out.<sup>271</sup> The SA was only slowly able to absorb these activists on the far right.<sup>272</sup> Continuous disputes between other paramilitary

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<sup>266</sup> Noakes, *Lower Saxony*, p. 86.

<sup>267</sup> At the end of 1926 the police reported that the SS protected Nazi meetings and handed out leaflets. At the time there were 951 SS members organised in seventy-five squadrons in Saxony (STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, Dezember 1926).

<sup>268</sup> Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 24.

<sup>269</sup> The police also reported that the *Jungdo* attracted most supporters among the rural youth (STA D, SâStKa, Nr. 132, Mai 1925).

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, September 1925.

<sup>271</sup> NSFS, Nr. 42, 16.10.1927.

<sup>272</sup> E.g. when the local branch of the *Wehrwolf* in Plauen was dissolved in spring 1926 eighteen members joined the *Frontbann* (STA D, Mdl, Nr.

organisations<sup>273</sup>, their failure to unite all forces on the radical right<sup>274</sup>, and their slow disintegration from 1927 onwards were crucial in driving their members to the SA<sup>275</sup>. The Nazis managed to win over many of these devoted activists of the far right by 1930 and benefited from the foundation other paramilitary organisations had laid. The NSDAP held its first meeting in Olbernhau/Erzgebirge in spring 1928. The seeds sown by other right-wing paramilitary organisations largely explains why Olbernhau later became a Nazi stronghold, gaining 23.1 per cent in the 1930 *Reichstag* elections.<sup>276</sup> Additionally, the local Nazis were able to build up branches with former members of the *völkisch* movement who had stopped their activities in the course of the first half of the 1920s.<sup>277</sup> The influx of these supporters from the radical right into the NSDAP in the second half of the 1920s was crucial for the continuously growing propaganda activity of the Nazi party.

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11126/6, April 1926). When the *Hermannsbund* in Leipzig (former *Stahlhelm* members) was dissolved at the end of 1928, most of the activists joined the NSDAP, the rest went back to the *Stahlhelm* (ibid., Nr. 11126/3, März 1929).

<sup>273</sup> In May 1927 the police in the KH Dresden speculated that the discord and publicly fought disputes had a paralysing effect on the work of *Stahlhelm*, *Jungdo*, and *Wiking* in their districts (ibid., KH Dresden, Nr. 262, Mai 1927).

<sup>274</sup> The attempt of the leading paramilitary organisations in Saxony (*Jungdo*, *Stahlhelm*, *Wehrwolf*, *Wiking Bund*, *Reichsflagge*, and also *Bund der Frauen*) to form a united movement on the right in defence against the left failed at the end of 1926 (ibid., Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, September 1926).

<sup>275</sup> A slow process of dissolution of these nationalist organisations took place after the radical right failed to unite in 1926. The Saxon police observed the trend among various paramilitary organisations that individual leaders tried to form independent organisations (ibid., Dezember 1926).

<sup>276</sup> NSfS, Nr. 17, 29.4.1928.

<sup>277</sup> E.g. the foundation of a NSDAP branch in Bockau (near Aue) was facilitated because there had been a branch of the VSB in the village before. All former members joined the NSDAP in autumn 1926 (ibid., Nr. 31, 3.10.1926).

(vi) Limits and success of the NSDAP in Saxony

The NSDAP faced several obstacles in its expansion in Saxony until the late 1920s. The unification of the disintegrated Nazi movement into the re-founded NSDAP was a slow process: "In Dresden as in other bigger towns there were various groups and factions, who often fought each other claiming they were the true representatives of Hitler and of the National Socialist party."<sup>278</sup> *Gauleiter* Mutschmann needed several years to impose his sole control over the movement and create a central command structure. Until mid-1926, Saxony was divided into several *Gaue*. Mutschmann's control as *Landesleiter* (state leader) varied considerably within Saxony. He had continuous problems in eastern Saxony<sup>279</sup>, where Hellmuth von Mücke even attempted to establish his own *Gau* in 1927.<sup>280</sup> Mutschmann's control over western Saxony was much tighter. He had no problem in merging *Gau* Chemnitz and Freiberg and appointed a loyal follower as new leader.<sup>281</sup> His authority was considerably strengthened because of a reorganisation at the annual party meeting in Weimar in July 1926. The Saxon *Gaue* lost much of their status and were renamed *Unter-Gaue*, and *Landesverband* Saxony became *Gau* Saxony with Mutschmann at the top.<sup>282</sup> Compared with other *Gaue*,

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<sup>278</sup> Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 21.

<sup>279</sup> Mutschmann removed the leader of eastern Saxony and Dresden from their offices in late 1926 (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, Oktober 1926). In early 1928 Mutschmann dissolved the branch of Dresden and submitted the individual members to the central control of Plauen (VB, Nr. 12, 15.1.1928). Strasser, Mutschmann, and Fritsch were present when the branch was re-founded in February 1928. They made sure that the former leaders were not allowed to re-enter the party, and that the loyal Hermann Gerischer was made leader of the branch (STA D, MdI, 11126/2, Februar 1928).

<sup>280</sup> See 'Helmuth von Mückes Führerpersönlichkeit', *SB*, Nr. 34, 25.8.1929.

<sup>281</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, Februar 1926.

<sup>282</sup> It is likely that Mutschmann received the title *Gauleiter* on this occasion (*ibid.*, August 1926).

Mutschmann's hold over his movement, at least in western Saxony, was comparatively firm<sup>283</sup>, and he belonged to the most important *Gauleiter* of the NSDAP<sup>284</sup>. He tried very hard to impose his authority over the local movement by appointing loyal people into important positions<sup>285</sup>, and was particularly sensitive when his chain of command as *Gauleiter* to the headquarters in Munich was undermined by local party branches.<sup>286</sup>

It took a long time before the leadership principle was practised in the appointment of local leaders. Most NSDAP branches functioned like normal clubs and elected their leader in annual, democratic elections.<sup>287</sup> A Nazi leader in Dresden complained about widespread *Vereinsmeierei* in various local branches in autumn 1929. He stressed that the NSDAP organisation was built up around leadership and not democratic principles, and found it incredible that in many cases the members and not the branch leaders had drawn up the list for the council elections.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> P. Hüttenberger, *Die Gauleiter. Studie zum Wandel des Machtgefüges in der NSDAP* (Stuttgart, 1969), p. 39.

<sup>284</sup> Before Hitler excluded Dinter, the Thuringia leader, from the NSDAP, he asked his seven most important *Gauleiter*, including Mutschmann, about their opinion (Hüttenberger, *Gauleiter*, p. 45).

<sup>285</sup> In early 1928 Mutschmann replaced Fritz Tittmann with Erich Kunz, a loyal associate, as leader of the *Unter-Gau* Zwickau (VB, Nr. 12, 15.1.1928). He also brought Karl Fritsch, another loyal supporter of his, to Plauen, and made him his deputy, and responsible over the party administration (STA D, MdI, 11126/2, Februar 1928).

<sup>286</sup> E.g. Mutschmann complained in Munich that the party branch in Zwickau was informed before him that there would not be a general party meeting in 1928. He wrote annoyed: "The authority suffers and the work of the *Gauleitung* is superfluous" (BA, SlSch, Nr. 208, Band 1, Mutschmann an München, 3.7.1928).

<sup>287</sup> Dönicke was re-elected as leader in Leipzig in summer 1928 (NSfS, Nr. 29, 22.8.1928).

<sup>288</sup> SB, Nr. 38, 22.9.1929.

Various party branches had continuous internal disputes<sup>289</sup>, did not respond to directions from the district or *Gau* level<sup>290</sup>, had problems in collecting membership dues, and attracting their members to meetings.<sup>291</sup> Additionally, the Saxon NSDAP was hampered by financial and organisational problems during elections.<sup>292</sup> Most branches grew slowly, and frequently there was a lack of interest. Mutschmann dissolved the branches of Borna and Döbeln because of low membership numbers in October 1927.<sup>293</sup> The NSDAP's affiliated organisations were still extremely small. The NSStB in Leipzig was not very active and only had twenty members at the end of 1926.<sup>294</sup> And there were only five HJ branches in the KH Leipzig in early 1927.<sup>295</sup>

Many blank spots remained on the map of Saxony, particularly in rural areas, where the Nazi party often had no representative at all. After two meetings the Nazis from Baderitz (near Döbeln) commented in frustration: "It is incredibly difficult to make any

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<sup>289</sup> The police reported about the NSDAP in Leipzig: "The local branch is very disrupted due to personal frictions and the existence of a large financial debt. Members who have left the party or who have been excluded from it try to win over the remaining supporters for a new founding" (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, Oktober 1926).

<sup>290</sup> In October 1927 the *Gau* headquarters complained that not all party branches had responded to circulars (NSfS, Nr. 42, 16.10.1927).

<sup>291</sup> The NSDAP branch of Bühlau (near Dresden) warned to ban everyone from the party who did not pay his outstanding membership fees. The branch also ordered that every member had to attend two internal party meetings (*Sprechabende*), and the membership meeting every month. The branch leader made clear that *Sprechabende* were essential for training, and that the meetings were not similar to those of a rifle club, where everyone comes when he fancies to (ibid., Nr. 29, 19.9.1926).

<sup>292</sup> The delivery of NSDAP placards for poll stations for the south-western part of Saxony for the 1926 state elections failed due to a lack of demand and organisational problems (ibid., Nr. 36, 7.11.1926).

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., Nr. 42, 16.10.1927.

<sup>294</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, November 1926. The Nazis only won one of fifteen seats (165 votes) at elections to the student body at the University in Leipzig in early 1928 (ibid., Nr. 11126/2, Februar 1928).

<sup>295</sup> In Leipzig, Grimma, Wurzen, Rochlitz, and Borna (NSfS, Nr. 7, 13.2.1927).

progress in this area ... the population is indifferent."<sup>296</sup> There were only a few party members in Leipzig, Colditz, Naunhof, and Borna in north-western Saxony, and the local NSDAP did not start to build up a party network and make propaganda in the rural areas of the KH Leipzig before 1929/1930.<sup>297</sup> The Nazis demonstrated their limits in their attempt to organise the eastern part of the state, which remained nearly free of Nazi presence until 1931. Furthermore, the NSDAP was still not the only party on the far-right<sup>298</sup>, and they were not able yet to seriously challenge the traditional working-class parties in their strongholds. Bennecke recalls the situation in Leipzig: "Everyone who was so careless as to show up with National Socialist symbols in working-class districts was ruthlessly beaten up."<sup>299</sup> Moreover, the influx of members into the NSDAP was volatile and declined drastically at the end of 1925. The party branch of Plauen lost one-third of its members between spring and winter 1925 (from 1200 to 800).<sup>300</sup> It is also true that the Nazis were confronted with problems of communication, and often had to carry out their work on bicycle or on foot.<sup>301</sup>

The limits of the Nazi Party became evident in elections too. They only gained 1.6 per cent of the vote in the 1926 state elections, and 2.7 per cent in the 1928 *Reichstag* elections. There were, however, positive signs. In May 1926 the NSDAP won its first seats in the Saxon state parliament. However, the two NSDAP members were

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., Nr. 23, 5.6.1927.

<sup>297</sup> *Das nationalsozialistische Sachsen*, p. 59.

<sup>298</sup> E.g. there was the foundation of a *völkisch* alliance (*Völkisch-soziale Arbeitsgemeinschaft*) in the electoral district of western Saxony in May 1926 (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, Mai 1926).

<sup>299</sup> Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', pp. 23-24.

<sup>300</sup> STA D, SÄStKa, Nr. 132, November 1925.

<sup>301</sup> SA men from Bautzen, Zittau and Strahwalde "walked, cycled or took the train" to carry out propaganda in Seifhennersdorf (NSfS, Nr. 41, 9.10.1927).

not very active in parliament between 1926 and 1929.<sup>302</sup> They backed the bourgeois coalition government of Heldt. Additionally, in 1929 the NSDAP faction drifted towards the right. This was a result of Hellmuth von Mücke's replacement by another Nazi in parliament. The former was a left-wing party activist and had resigned his seat in 1929.<sup>303</sup>

The NSDAP was still a predominantly urban movement, and was restricted to the major towns and a few party branches in the countryside.<sup>304</sup> However, the Nazis made slow, but continuous progress in rural areas, particularly the Erzgebirge/Vogtland, and gradually covered former blank regions with propaganda.<sup>305</sup> Active party branches spread the movement into surrounding villages<sup>306</sup>, and large branches in towns had to be divided into districts. The NSDAP branch in Plauen had five districts and organised *Sprechabende* in each of them in mid-1925.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Tittmann declared that they would reject joining the useless chatter in the state parliament, and that they would only occasionally voice their opinion (VdSL, 3. Wp, Sitzung Nr. 68, 21.2.1928, p. 2451).

<sup>303</sup> The Social Democrat Neu observed that the NSDAP was moving more and more to the right after Mücke's departure from the parliament (ibid., 108. Sitzung, 26.2.1929, p. 4044).

<sup>304</sup> In the municipal elections in 1926 the NSDAP had lists in the free towns of Leipzig, Chemnitz, Plauen, Zwickau, Meißen, Bautzen, Reichenbach, and Aue. The party had no representation in any village with less than 500 citizens, and in the towns of Zittau, Freital, Freiberg, Pirna, Glauchau, Crimmitschau, Riesa, Meerane, Döbeln, Werdau, Mittweida, Wurzen. The NSDAP only gained 4,455 votes (of overall 19,549) in all places with less than 10,000 citizens in Saxony (StJbSa, (1927/28), pp. 402-405).

<sup>305</sup> E.g. the Nazis held their first meeting in Freital in March 1927 (NSfS, Nr. 20, 15.5.1927), and in Crimmitschau in spring 1928 (ibid., Nr. 18, 6.5.1928).

<sup>306</sup> E.g. Lengefeld possessed a small, but active Nazi branch (fifteen members), who successfully agitated in the surrounding villages for the 1928 Reichstag elections (ibid., Nr. 25, 24.6.1928).

<sup>307</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/6, August 1925.

## 7. The breakthrough of the NSDAP: 1929-1930

### (i) Germany

Despite the Nazis' increased propaganda activities for seeking power through elections, and their progress in establishing a central and efficient party machine, the NSDAP's electoral success was limited until the late 1920s. The Nazis had few representatives in the state parliaments of Prussia, Bavaria, Thuringia, and Saxony at the beginning of 1928<sup>308</sup>, and only won 2.6 per cent of the vote in the 1928 *Reichstag* elections. Several factors helped change the Nazis' fortune and brought about their breakthrough as a political force and mass party. First, the years of comparative political stability and economic prosperity after 1924 came to an end. The political, social and economic conditions deteriorated rapidly at the end of the 1920s. Peasants and middle classes were facing increasing difficulties from the end of 1927, and Germany was hit by a severe economic crisis after the Wall Street crash in October 1929.<sup>309</sup> Additionally, a radicalization and polarisation of the political system began after the election of 1928, and brought the breakdown of the DVP and SPD coalition government in March 1930.<sup>310</sup> Chancellor Brüning's use of emergency decrees from summer 1930 onwards ended parliamentary government in Germany. Second, after the NSDAP's unsuccessful attempt to attract the urban working classes, the party reorientated most of its attention towards winning over the Protestant middle classes and peasantry after "its relatively

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<sup>308</sup> Stachura, 'Strategy', p. 276.

<sup>309</sup> Noakes/Pridham *Nazism*, pp. 57-58, 64.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.



positive performance in some rural-agrarian areas in northern and southern Germany" in the 1928 *Reichstag* election.<sup>311</sup> And lastly, there were "the special dynamics of National Socialism itself"<sup>312</sup>, i.e. the Nazis' increasingly efficient party organisation, their relentless propaganda drive, and the populist magnet Hitler. The success of the NSDAP in elections of various state parliaments signaled its rise from mid-1928. When the NSDAP won 14.4 per cent of the vote in the state elections in Saxony in June 1930 it sent shock waves round Germany. One month later, Chancellor Brüning chose to ignore the NSDAP's recent election success and made the fateful decision to dissolve the chamber and announced new elections because he had failed to win the necessary backing for his programme of financial retrenchment in the *Reichstag*. The Nazis exploited the situation and achieved a dramatic national breakthrough in the September *Reichstag* elections. The NSDAP won 18.3 per cent of the vote and became the second largest party in the Republic.

(ii) 1929: the political breakthrough of the NSDAP in Saxony

The general atmosphere changed dramatically in Saxony in 1929, particularly in the second half of the year. The economic crisis set in and affected more and more people in the state. In autumn 1929 the police reported about the situation in the AH Schwarzenberg: "The economic situation is regarded as bad due to the generally high food prices and unemployment. The mood in the population is

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<sup>311</sup> Stachura, 'Strategy', pp. 277-279.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

depressed."<sup>313</sup> The radical right, led by the Nazis, suddenly appeared in large groups in the streets. The Communists smelt the end of the capitalist system and increased their agitation. There was a swift upturn in violence.<sup>314</sup> A report from the KH Leipzig described the increasing division and polarization of Saxon society, and the rise of the NSDAP: "The year 1929 brought an increase of political tensions; on the one hand on a general level between bourgeois and Marxist parties ... on the other hand within the bourgeoisie during the referendum about the Young plan, where there was a dividing line between DNVP and DVP, and among the paramilitary organisations between Stahlhelm and Jungdo. Additionally, the National Socialists (Hitlerblock) showed extreme activity, particularly in propaganda meetings, what resulted in counter activities from the Marxist organisations."<sup>315</sup>

After many years of slow growth and stagnation the momentum of the local Nazi movement accelerated in 1929. This was similar in other parts of the Republic.<sup>316</sup> The Saxon Nazis, however, were noted for their relentless activity already from early 1929 onwards<sup>317</sup>, and the increased number of activists among the

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<sup>313</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1942, September 1929.

<sup>314</sup> There were several clashes and fights between Nazis and Communists, and five people were killed and fourteen severely wounded when police fired at textile strikers in Hartmannsdorf in late 1929 (ibid., MdI, Nr. 11126/3, Oktober 1929).

<sup>315</sup> STA L, AH Döbeln, Nr. 2409, Rückblick auf das Jahr 1929.

<sup>316</sup> The turning point for the NSDAP in Thuringia were the state elections in December 1929 where it won 11.3 per cent of the vote (Tracey 'Thuringia', p. 40). Böhnke observed "a distinct improvement" for the NSDAP "from summer 1929 onwards ... The NSDAP increased its propaganda activities now, tightened up its agitation methods, and substantially increased the number of public meetings" (Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, pp. 122-123).

<sup>317</sup> In early 1929 the Saxon Nazis reported that more people joined the party and more branches were founded than in the years before (*SB*, Nr. 8, 24.2.1929). The SPD reported: "So far these people were insignificant in Saxony. Recently, however, one could observe that they unfolded great

SA.<sup>318</sup> This development ran parallel to, and was enhanced by, two election successes which marked a turning point for the NSDAP in Saxony. The NSDAP was the main winner in the state elections in Saxony in May 1929, the first significant electoral test after the 1928 *Reichstag* elections.<sup>319</sup> Although the party only won a modest five per cent of the vote (the Nazi vote nearly doubled from 74,343 to 133,958 within one year; see Table 6), the winning of five seats suddenly catapulted the Nazis into the political limelight, and gave

**Table 6:** Votes for the NSDAP in elections in Saxony between 1926 and 1930 (percentage in brackets)

electoral districts	LW October 1926	RW May 1928	LW May 1929
Dresden	7,562 (0.8)	18,245 (1.8)	36,589 (2.8)
Leipzig	5,778 (0.9)	14,601 (1.9)	25,901 (3.5)
Chemnitz	24,385 (2.9)	41,497 (4.3)	71,468 (7.5)
Saxony	37,725 (1.6)	74,343 (2.7)	133,958 (5.0)

electoral districts	LW June 1930	RW September 1930
Dresden	106,080 (11.3)	180,530 (16.1)
Leipzig	78,556 (10.7)	115,987 (14.0)
Chemnitz	192,133 (20.5)	264,854 (23.8)
Saxony	376,769 (14.4)	561,371 (18.3)

Source: *StJbSa*, (1924-1930).

them a key position in the state parliament by tolerating the coalition of the middle and right under Wilhelm Büniger. The Nazis

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activity in meetings even before the verdict of the court dissolved the state parliament" (*DVZ*, Nr. 111, 15.5.1929).

<sup>318</sup> The Saxon intelligence service reported: "The NSDAP was very active again. Particularly active was the uniformed SA, which has grown considerable in size (*STA D*, Mdl, Nr. 11126/3, Oktober 1929).

<sup>319</sup> The Social Democrat's successfully appealed to the Saxon court of Justice to declare the 1926 state elections invalid due to "a minor discrepancy" between the state electoral system and the *Reich* constitution. The SPD's strategy was to "re-enact its success" of the 1928 *Reichstag* elections and to remove the ASPD from the political scene (B. N. Lapp, 'Political Polarization in Weimar Germany: The Saxon Bürgertum and the Left, 1918/1919-1930', (PhD Berkeley/California, 1991), pp. 242-243).

exploited their powerful position and constantly threatened to bring down the new government when their demands were not met. Additionally, the Nazis also started to become a political force in local government due to their gains in the municipal elections at the end of the year. After the elections the Saxon police intelligence service observed that the NSDAP had again increased its electorate and gained the position of "*Zünglein an der Waage*" between the two political blocks of the middle and right. They found "a general move to the right."<sup>320</sup> Even the SPD admitted that the NSDAP managed "to win support among the proletariat" in many medium and small sized towns in the south-west.<sup>321</sup>

In contrast to the 1928 *Reichstag* elections, the parties on the middle and right (DVP, WP, DNVP, Z, VRP) and representatives of industry, agreed to concentrate their main energies on preventing a red dictatorship of the Left rather than fighting each other during the May 1929 election campaign.<sup>322</sup> The block on the right tried "to prevent a Soviet Saxony", while the Left tried to achieve exactly this. The *Vogtländischer Anzeiger* reported: "Two broadly fighting fronts are facing each other, on the one side international Marxism, on the other side nationalists with a strong sentiment towards their *Volk* and fatherland."<sup>323</sup> The conservative *LNN* described a dull election campaign in which "the right had no programme or idea" except using the threat of a "Soviet-Saxony" again to rally their

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<sup>320</sup> STA D, MdI, 11126/3, Oktober 1929. However, this was mainly limited to the Vogtland, where the Nazis were able to become the largest party in fifty-two villages and towns (*SB*, Nr. 22, 2.6.1929). Overall, the NSDAP only gained 4.3 per cent of all votes in the municipal elections in 1929 (*StJbSa*, (1930)).

<sup>321</sup> *DVZ*, Nr. 275, 27.11.1929

<sup>322</sup> See 'Die Zusammenarbeit bürgerlicher Parteien', *Dresdner Anzeiger*, Nr. 162, 7.4.1929; and 'Die sächsische Industrie zu den Landtagswahlen', *Dresdner Anzeiger*, Nr. 174, 14.4.1929.

<sup>323</sup> See 'Kampf dem Marxismus', *Vogtländischer Anzeiger*, Nr. 95, 24.4.1929.

support, while the divided Left attempted to gain votes from each other.<sup>324</sup> What was new and noticeable was the activism of the Nazis between these traditional blocks. The NSDAP "had become the single political representative of the far right ... and had created a unified organization highly proficient in electioneering skills."<sup>325</sup> The Nazis gained from the traditional middle-class parties.<sup>326</sup> Their stronghold was still south-western Saxony, where they gained support in settlements of all sizes. Additionally, they were quick to respond to their electoral success and to the influx of new members, and continued to build up the party organisation.<sup>327</sup>

(iii) 1930: the dramatic rise of the NSDAP in Saxony

1930 was the most important year for the Nazi movement in Saxony before the seizure of power in 1933. The NSDAP accelerated its momentum from the previous year, grew dramatically, and became a mass party.

Although the Nazis continually warned the bourgeois government that they should follow their demands, they nevertheless backed Brücker as Prime Minister until February 1930. But when Brücker voted for the ratification of the Young plan in the *Reichsrat*, the Nazis used the occasion to withdraw their support from his

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<sup>324</sup> *LNN*, Nr. 131, 11.5.1929.

<sup>325</sup> Tracey, 'Thuringia', p. 48.

<sup>326</sup> It is unlikely that the NSDAP gained from new voters in 1929. The participation of all eligible voters in elections in Saxony was as follows: LW 1920: 70.12 per cent; LW 1922: 81.8; LW 1926: 71.1 (Chemnitz: 70 per cent); RW 1928: 79.7 (Chemnitz: 77.3); LW 1929: 77.4 (Chemnitz: 75.7); LW 1930: 73.7 (Chemnitz: 72.9); RW 1930: 88.5 (Chemnitz: 85.8) (*St/bSa*, (1924-1930)).

<sup>327</sup> E.g. Mutschmann divided the district of Vogtland due to "continuous growth" of the NSDAP (*STA D*, MdI, Nr. 11126/3, August 1929). The Nazis in Leipzig reported busy internal activities in the whole district, and the success of political training and speaker courses (*SB*, Nr. 22, 2.6.1929; *ibid.*, Nr. 29, 21.7.1929).

government.<sup>328</sup> Bünger's government resigned when the Nazis motion of no-confidence was supported by DNVP and SLV on the right, and SPD and KPD on the left on 18 February 1930.<sup>329</sup> Thereafter, Saxony was "in a state of political limbo for several months."<sup>330</sup> The SPD's offer to enter a grand coalition with the DDP and DVP was rejected by the DVP. After all attempts to form a new coalition government failed, the DDP suggested the appointment of a 'neutral cabinet of experts' under Walter Schieck, a member of the DVP. In late February/early March the Nazis put forward several conditions under which they would support such a bourgeois coalition government (see Appendix 3). However, Schieck's cabinet only lasted from 6 to 20 May when SPD, KPD, and NSDAP voted to dissolve the state parliament and forced new elections.<sup>331</sup>

All three parties hoped to gain from new elections. But the KPD only gained one new seat, while the SPD saw its share of the poll decline. The NSDAP gained the most from the elections. The Nazis achieved their first breakthrough in a major province in Germany by gaining 14.4 per cent of the votes in the elections on 22 June. The national Nazi leadership had participated in the NSDAP's first centrally organised, massive election campaign.<sup>332</sup> The NSDAP had concentrated all its energies on Saxony to create a 'central German block of National Socialism' - "a bastion against Bolshevism and

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<sup>328</sup> See 'Schluß mit dem sächsischen Erfüllungskabinett!', *ibid.*, Nr. 7, 16.2.30.

<sup>329</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, Januar 1930.

<sup>330</sup> Lapp, 'Saxon Bürgertum', p. 264.

<sup>331</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, Februar-März 1930. On 6 May the NSDAP had handed in blank ballot papers and made possible the election of Schieck.

<sup>332</sup> See 'Befehlsausgabe vor der Schlacht', *FK*, Nr. 3, 4.8.1930. The Nazis' started the election campaign with their state meeting in Plauen in early June 1930. Hitler, Strasser, Goebbels, Schemm, and Epp spoke on this occasion (*Dresdner Nachrichten*, Nr. 255, 2.6.1930).

slavery" - together with neighbouring Thuringia (see Appendix 4). The plan was to make Gregor Strasser, like Frick in Weimar, Minister of the Interior in a bourgeois coalition government. And indeed, the Nazis increased their seats from five to fourteen. After the elections Hitler expressed his willingness to co-operate with the bourgeois parties in an article in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, and put forward comparatively moderate demands.<sup>333</sup> However, the constellation of power in the state parliament prevented them from reaping the same benefit as in neighbouring Thuringia. The negotiations to make Gregor Strasser Minister of the Interior, in which Hitler participated personally in Dresden<sup>334</sup>, were unsuccessful because the Democrats and the VNR (former Jungdo) were not willing to give the Nazis the necessary support in parliament.<sup>335</sup> Unlike Thuringia, where the DNVP, *Landbund*, DVP, WP and NSDAP held a majority in parliament,<sup>336</sup> this was not the case in Saxony. The Nazis' hope to gain more bargaining power

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<sup>333</sup> Hitler made following demands: 1. financial revitalization, 2. protection of the professional national economy, 3. protection of the states from centralization, 4. nationalization of the citizens, 5. Christian-German culture (VB, Nr. 149, 25.6.1930).

<sup>334</sup> Hitler stayed in Dresden between 14.-15. July 1930 (LVZ, Nr. 167, 21.7.1930). Killinger's replacement by Karl Fritsch as leader of the NSDAP's parliamentary faction was a partial result of this (*Volkszeitung für Löbau*, Nr. 164, 17.7.1930). Killinger appeared too wavering in the support of the Munich party line during the dispute between O. Strasser and Hitler. At the time he preferred the opposition role for the NSDAP in the Saxon parliament (*Volkszeitung für Plauen*, Nr. 147, 27.6.1930). Additionally, Mutschmann was keen to replace the potential rival with the loyal Fritsch.

<sup>335</sup> Additionally, the willingness of the DNVP, WP and DVP to include Gregor Strasser as Minister of the Interior in a coalition cabinet received a "cold shower" when Berlin warned Frick that it might cut subsidies for the Thuringian police. The DVP's and WP's attempt to win Strasser for a different cabinet post fell through because the Nazis were not prepared to compromise. Most importantly, a coalition government with the NSDAP would not have had the backing of a majority in parliament ('Hitler Fiasko in Sachsen', *Vossische Zeitung*, Nr. 180, 30.7.1930).

<sup>336</sup> Tracey, 'Thuringia', pp. 42-43.

after a victory in the *Reichstag* election in September 1930<sup>337</sup> was not fulfilled although their party achieved a remarkable national breakthrough and was able to increase its vote in Saxony to 18.3 per cent. The NSDAP unsuccessfully continued to voice its demands that "Gregor Strasser must become Minister of the Interior in Saxony"<sup>338</sup>, or that "Saxony's only hope of overcoming the crisis is new elections"<sup>339</sup>.

The Saxon NSDAP remained condemned to the powerless opposition benches due to the attitude of the DDP and VNR, but also because of a change of tactics by the SPD. The Saxon SPD - similar to their colleagues' behaviour towards Brüning in the *Reichstag* - tolerated a bourgeois government without Nazi participation as the lesser evil rather than facing new elections in which the NSDAP would increase its electorate even further.<sup>340</sup> As the parties were not able to agree on a new coalition government after the June 1930 elections, Schieck's 'cabinet of experts' remained in power as caretaker government until the Nazis' dissolved the parliament in March 1933. This was the only solution that kept the parliamentary system intact in a state that faced extreme political divisions and polarization. Fenske rightly argued that "Saxony was thus the first state government in the Weimar Republic in which

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337 See 'Der Sinn der Reichstagswahl. Entscheidung im Reich ist Klärung in Sachsen!', *FK*, Nr. 24, 28.8.1930.

338 *Ibid.*, Nr. 43, 19.9.1930.

339 See Straßer's speech at the *Gau* meeting in late 1930 (*ibid.*, Nr. 80, 3.11.1930).

340 E.g. the SPD supported Schieck when the KPD, NSDAP and DNVP voted to dissolve the parliament on 7.10.1930 (*Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*, Nr. 235, 8.10.1930).



the parliamentary system ceased to function prior to its abolition by the National Socialist."<sup>341</sup>

The reasons for the rapid rise of the NSDAP in Saxony were similar to those in other regions of the *Reich*: rapidly deteriorating social, political and economic conditions, and the Nazis' own dynamic. The intelligence service summed up the situation in the KH Leipzig: "1930 was the year of the greatest economic decline so far, and therefore at the same time a year when political radicalism grew rapidly."<sup>342</sup> A distinctive feature of Saxon society was the further increase of violence in the streets and during party meetings - mainly between Communists and Nazis - which sometimes ended in killings.<sup>343</sup> Both sides provoked each other, and the clashes were particularly frequent when the Nazis attempted to hold meetings in working-class districts.<sup>344</sup> The fact that most NSDAP meetings continued to be visited by a majority of opponents was the major reason for violence.<sup>345</sup> The Nazis blamed the inactivity of the government for the violence, and warned that they would take matters into their own hands if the police did not act.<sup>346</sup> There was

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<sup>341</sup> H. Fenske, *Wahlrecht und Parteiensystem. Ein Beitrag zur Deutschen Parteiengeschichte* (Frankfurt, 1972), p. 304 (in Lapp, 'Saxon Bürgertum', p. 282).

<sup>342</sup> STA L, AH Döbeln, Nr. 2409, Rückblick auf das Jahr 1930.

<sup>343</sup> E.g. two people were killed in clashes between the NSDAP and KPD in Eythra and Reinholdshain in June 1930 (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, Juni 1930).

<sup>344</sup> The police reported on the June 1930 election campaign: "The challenging behaviour of members of the NSDAP contributed to a large extent to disturbances and clashes, but it cannot be denied that the KPD ... is determined to use violence ... 'to prevent the penetration of the Fascists in working-class districts'" (ibid., KH Dresden, Nr. 264, Juni 1930). Clashes between Nazis and Marxists in the KH Dresden happened all in Marxist strongholds during the campaign to the 1930 *Reichstag* election (Freital, Großenhain, Radeberg, Meißen, and Riesa) (ibid., September 1930).

<sup>345</sup> In the 154 NSDAP meetings in the KH Dresden in December 1930 "a great proportion of the participants were supporters of other parties, mainly the KPD" (ibid., Dezember 1930).

<sup>346</sup> E.g. Killinger complained in parliament about Communist terror and their anti-Nazi slogan 'beat them where ever you meet them'. He continued:

also an increase of violence between the police and demonstrators. The often brutal confrontations, some of which also ended with deaths<sup>347</sup>, expressed the growing tensions and divisions in Saxon society.

There was a general increase of political activity from early 1930 onwards, particularly on the radical left and right. The KPD tried to exploit the economic crisis to win supporters among the unemployed<sup>348</sup>, and the NSDAP became by far the most active and conspicuous party, even during election campaigns<sup>349</sup>, and was able to attract an increasing number of visitors to their meetings.<sup>350</sup> Both groups agreed that the Republic had to be destroyed as quickly as possible.<sup>351</sup> The increased politicisation became most evident during election campaigns, e.g. in June 1930: "The election campaign was fought with particular sharpness and great effort in methods of agitation by all political parties ... There was a vigorous fighting spirit particularly among the KPD and NSDAP."<sup>352</sup> The

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"The government should be aware that we will not allow anyone to terrorize us and that we will ward off violent attacks by opponents with all our means ... We draw the government's attention that it is responsible for the consequences of this murder-chase and not ourselves" (VdSL, 4. Wp, 11. Sitzung, 23.10.1929, pp. 355-356).

<sup>347</sup> E.g. the police used its firearms during an unemployed demonstration in Leipzig at the end of 1930. Nine demonstrators were injured, three of them died soon later (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, November 1930).

<sup>348</sup> E.g. see *ibid.*, KH Dresden, Nr. 264, Februar 1930.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, Juni 1930, August 1930.

<sup>350</sup> E.g. see the typical police report from the KH Dresden in February 1930: "There was busy political agitation ... The NSDAP ranked first regarding the number of meetings ... The meetings of this party were often surprisingly well visited even in small places" (*ibid.*, Januar 1930).

<sup>351</sup> This agreement became very evident in parliamentary debates, e.g. during a speech of Renner, the leader of the Saxon KPD, in late 1929: "It is not possible to celebrate this Republic, this Republic should be (member of parliament von Killinger: sent to hell) - must be quickly destroyed by the proletarian masses (...) The masses have to overcome all the forces who attempt to rescue the Republic (Well spoken! From the Communists and the National Socialists)" (VdSL, 4. Wp, 18. Sitzung, 10.12.1929, pp. 561 ff.).

<sup>352</sup> STA D, KH Dresden, Nr. 264, Juni 1930.

atmosphere in Saxony changed markedly in 1930. The peaceful and tranquil times were over and the bleak economic prospects led to a fear of disturbances.<sup>353</sup> The police in the KH Dresden reported in December 1930: "There was no sign of a quiet phase in political life as usually at this time of the year. Due to the wide-spread propaganda activities of the NSDAP all other parties, particularly the KPD and SPD, felt obliged to organise a great number of public events and protest meetings."<sup>354</sup>

#### (iv) Features of the NSDAP in Saxony

The Nazis promulgated a set of themes in Saxony. Most important was their demand to rid the administration of Marxism and to fight corruption in the state and local administration.<sup>355</sup> These demands were the main conditions for tolerating a bourgeois government between May 1929 and early 1930.<sup>356</sup> They used their unsatisfactory implementation to help bring down the government

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<sup>353</sup> Various district administrations voiced the fear of disturbances because of the depressed economy (ibid., Juli 1930).

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., Dezember 1930.

<sup>355</sup> E.g. the Nazis reported that the two leaders of the town administration in Bautzen received seventy-five *Reichsmark* bonus on their electricity bill every year (*SB*, Nr. 80, 28.5.1930), or that Social Democrats received the highest wages and quickest promotions in the local health insurance group in Leipzig (ibid., Nr. 81, 29.5.1930).

<sup>356</sup> Killinger put forward the first serious warning to Büniger in August 1929. He warned about the appointment of Elsner (ASPD) as Minister of Employment and reminded Büniger that the whole administration was still full with Marxists (see 'Eine Nationalsozialistische Warnung an Büniger', ibid., Nr. 35, 31.8.1929). In early 1930 Fritsch gave a speech in parliament about the corruption since 1918 and argued that it was a mirror of the system the society lived in. He focused on the corruption within the Saxon Ministry of Employment and Welfare under Elsner and the state insurance (with president Tempel, ASPD). The NSDAP proposed a vote of no confidence for Elsner (seventeen yes, two no, rest: abstentions), but backed the government when the KPD proposed a vote of no-confidence (*VdSL*, 4. Wp, 20. Sitzung, 14.1.1930, pp. 679 ff.).

of Büniger and Schieck in the first half of 1930<sup>357</sup>, and used corruption again as the main theme in their election campaign in June 1930. The Nazis portrayed themselves as the only group outside the traditional parties, and thus the only ones capable of solving the problems. They demanded: "Make room you old ones, the young generation wants to save what you were not able to sell off yet."<sup>358</sup> Additionally, they delivered lively speeches against international capitalism and put forward "accusations against companies and trusts, against their price fixing and exploitation, and criticized high pensions, wages, and other incomes."<sup>359</sup> Even the SPD admitted that this was a powerful appeal to all groups in a society which was dominated by small and medium scale industries.<sup>360</sup>

The Nazis' aggressive stand against Marxism came increasingly to the forefront in the course of 1930. After they managed to make major inroads into the middle-class parties in the elections in June and September 1930 they announced: "Clear front in Saxony! National Socialism against Marxism. The bourgeoisie is crushed ... We will go into the factories, we will go to the unemployed."<sup>361</sup> The emphasis on combatting the traditional working-class parties in earnest came one year after the Nazis had seriously started to woo

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<sup>357</sup> Before the Nazis helped to topple the Schieck government they explained: "The determination to clean the Saxon administration from all corruption motivated our attack against Elsner and other corrupt civil servants, and we will continue this fundamental struggle ... We do not want an election campaign because of party-egoistic interests and hope that the new parliament will thoroughly sweep away all remnants of the Marxist betrayal once and for all" (*SB*, Nr. 75, 22.5.1930).

<sup>358</sup> See 'Landtagsauflösung und Neuwahl', *ibid.*, Nr. 77, 24.5.1930.

<sup>359</sup> See 'Lehren des 22. Juni', (Paul Löbe), *DVZ*, Nr. 149, 30.6.1930.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>361</sup> *FK*, Nr. 39, 15.9.1930.

the middle classes.<sup>362</sup> The Nazis did this most forcefully in their campaigns against Marxist consumer cooperatives (*Konsumgenossenschaften*)<sup>363</sup>, and department stores<sup>364</sup>, which played an important role in Saxony.<sup>365</sup> Another general theme of the NSDAP was their determination to fight against the Young Plan<sup>366</sup>, and to blame the 'system' for the economic crisis.<sup>367</sup> The Nazis also frequently blamed the *Reich* for lack of aid for Saxony<sup>368</sup>, and the government in Dresden for not pressing the *Reich* hard enough for orders from the *Reich* for Saxony.<sup>369</sup> The NSDAP also emphasized Saxony's position next to Czechoslovakia, and the importance of keeping contact with Germans living across the border.<sup>370</sup> And lastly, the Nazis continued to express extreme anti-Semitism.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> E.g. see Killinger's appeal to the government in August 1929 to pay the salary for the civil servants in Saxony before they go on holidays (*VdSL*, 4. Wp, 8. Sitzung, 11.7.1929).

<sup>363</sup> The NSDAP passed motions in town councils throughout Saxony to cancel their links with consumer associations in 1930. They failed in Leipzig and Chemnitz only due to the resistance of SPD, KPD and DDP (*SB*, 21.3.1930, and 16.4.1930), but succeeded in Oelsnitz/Erzgebirge (*ibid.*, Nr. 1/2.3.1930).

<sup>364</sup> The *SB* described how unemployed people sold tinsel outside the Karstadt department store in Dresden: While the unemployed starved and froze, the Jewish owner of Karstadt rejoiced about his profit (*ibid.*, Nr. 1, 5.1.1930).

<sup>365</sup> K. Lobmeier, 'Die sozialökonomische Lage und das politische Verhalten der "alten" Mittelschichten in der Kreishauptmannschaft Chemnitz 1927 bis 1935' (PhD Leipzig, 1989), pp. 16-17.

<sup>366</sup> E.g. see Fritsch's speech in *VdSL*, 4. Wp, 11. Sitzung, 23.10.1929.

<sup>367</sup> The *SB* introduced the section 'Under the sign of Young' in which it reported very personally how the depression affected the local population. In one issue they reported that the innkeeper Meyer had shot himself and the worker Langer hanged himself in Annaberg, and in Chemnitz a twenty-one year old female worker poisoned herself because of the bad economic situation. Additionally, the two old hardware shops Meyer and Neumeister were in financial difficulties in Chemnitz (*SB*, 18.3.1930; also *ibid.*, Nr. 76, 23.5.1930).

<sup>368</sup> See 'Die Berliner Absage. Leere Worte für die sächsische Not', *ibid.*, Nr. 77, 24.5.1930.

<sup>369</sup> E.g. see *FK*, Nr. 93, 18.11.1930.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 87, 11.11.1930.

<sup>371</sup> The Nazis in Plauen wrote in early 1930: "You are aware - as long as you read our newspaper with interest - that the Jew is to blame for our incredible misery" (*SB*, Nr. 2, 12.1.1930.) The *FK* had a section with jokes about Jews: 'Laugh about our Jewish friend' (*ibid.*, Nr. 50, 27.9.1930.).

The police had to intervene when Nazi supporters sang: "The revolution will only march when the Jews bleed" during a meeting in Dresden.<sup>372</sup>

On a lower level, the Nazis tried to attract different professions and groups in society by appealing directly to them. For this purpose the NSDAP continued to set up more and more special interest groups. Again, the Nazis concentrated most of their propaganda on the middle classes and set up NSDAP groups for farmers<sup>373</sup>, teachers<sup>374</sup>, doctors<sup>375</sup>, lawyers<sup>376</sup>, and stenographers<sup>377</sup>. At the same time the Nazis made great efforts to woo white collar workers in the DHV<sup>378</sup>, civil servants<sup>379</sup>, workmen (*Handwerker*)<sup>380</sup>, bakers<sup>381</sup>, innkeepers<sup>382</sup>, policemen<sup>383</sup>, and cottage workers

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<sup>372</sup> DVZ, Nr. 204, 2.9.1929.

<sup>373</sup> The Nazis set up an agricultural organisation and a news letter in early 1930 (*SB*, 7.3.1930). They frequently demanded aid for the farmers (*ibid.*, 5.3.1930), printed reports about the agricultural chamber (*ibid.*, 18.3.1930), and increasingly organised meetings for farmers (*ibid.*, 29.3.1930).

<sup>374</sup> The first meeting of the 'National Socialist Teacher Organisation' took place in Plauen on 2 March 1930 (*ibid.*, Nr. 8, 23.2.1930).

<sup>375</sup> The Gau leadership asked for the creation of the 'National Socialist Doctors Association' in August 1930 (*FK*, Nr. 1, 1.8.1930).

<sup>376</sup> The Association of 'National Socialist Lawyers' held their first public meeting in Leipzig on 2 October 1930 (*ibid.*, Nr. 70, 21.10.1930).

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 88, 12.11.1930.

<sup>378</sup> In early 1930 the Nazis rejoiced about their success in the DHV (*SB*, 4.3.1930). Half a year later, after Nazi activist were expelled from the DHV, the Nazis attacked DHV leaders of representing the interest of the industrialist, and not those of older impoverished or unemployed employees (*FK*, Nr. 36, 11.9.1930).

<sup>379</sup> There was a meeting for civil servants in Leipzig in autumn 1930 (*ibid.*, Nr. 35, 10.9.1930), and the Nazis published an official statement that they stood behind this group without reservation (*ibid.*, Nr. 46, 23.9.1930).

<sup>380</sup> E.g. the *SB* reported about a conference of the Saxon craft (*SB*, 25.3.1930).

<sup>381</sup> Nazis spoke to members of the union of baker apprentices (*ibid.*, 9.4.1930).

<sup>382</sup> The Nazis tried to appeal to innkeepers by condemning the planned new liquid tax during the campaign for the 1930 *Reichstag* election. Later that year they promising "to back the incredibly threatened profession with all their means", and supported those innkeepers who refused to pay the new tax (*FK*, Nr. 83, 6.11.1930).

<sup>383</sup> The NSDAP branch in Dresden announced that all plain-clothes policemen had free entrance to their meetings (*ibid.*, Nr. 93, 18.11.1930).

producing musical instruments<sup>384</sup>. Additionally, a 'National Socialist Economic Association' for the threatened middle classes<sup>385</sup>, a 'NSDAP Automobile Corps'<sup>386</sup>, a pressure group for German culture (*Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur*)<sup>387</sup>, an organisation with sentiments for fatherland and nature (*Heimatsfreunde*)<sup>388</sup>, and a newsletter for the NSDAP members of local government<sup>389</sup> were set up. The NSDAP in Leipzig offered free judicial advice for subscribers of the *SB*.<sup>390</sup>

Meanwhile the 'older' organisations affiliated with the party made progress too. The NSDAP's female organisations expanded and were busy in their work for the party. Jill Stephenson wrote about the NSF in Leipzig: "Lotte Rühlemann's groups were kept busy providing food for the needy, making Party uniforms, and somehow 'procuring boots.'"<sup>391</sup> The NSF in Leipzig had to be divided into four districts after the work of four years<sup>392</sup>, and Saxony became the heartland of the newly created League of German Girls (BdM) and the Nazi Schoolgirls' League (NSSi).<sup>393</sup> The Nazi youth movement grew too.<sup>394</sup> At the same time, the Nazis continued their

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<sup>384</sup> The Nazis propagated to fight against tax on music instruments (*ibid.*, Nr. 89, 13.11.1930).

<sup>385</sup> *SB*, Nr. 46, 17.11.1929.

<sup>386</sup> *FK*, Nr. 89, 13.11.1930.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 88, 12.11.1930.

<sup>388</sup> It aimed at the cultivation of rambling, mountain, and winter sport (*SB*, Nr. 41, 13.10.1929).

<sup>389</sup> The district leader Kunz announced to publish a local community newsletter for party activists in autumn 1930 (*FK*, Nr. 73, 24.10.1930).

<sup>390</sup> *SB*, Nr. 7, 17.2.1929.

<sup>391</sup> J. Stephenson, *The Nazi Organisation of Women* (London, 1980), p. 73.

<sup>392</sup> *FK*, Nr. 79, 1.11.1930.

<sup>393</sup> Stephenson, *Nazi Women*, p. 86.

<sup>394</sup> The Nazi *Jungmannschaft* met for the first time on 28.5.1930 in Leipzig (*SB*, Nr. 80, 28.5.1930).

efforts in trying to recruit working class support<sup>395</sup>, and to get a foothold at the work place.<sup>396</sup> The NSDAP also increasingly attempted to attract the unemployed from the end of 1930 onwards.<sup>397</sup>

The dramatic membership influx (see Figure 3 below) made it necessary to split up municipal party branches into sections. Leipzig had eleven sections in June 1930<sup>398</sup>, Plauen was divided into twelve sections in late 1930<sup>399</sup>, and the movement in Chemnitz was thriving.<sup>400</sup> The division into sections strengthened the

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<sup>395</sup> On May the First 1930 about 3000 Nazis marched through Plauen (STA D, Mdl, Nr. 19086). A new column, 'From the Work Place' ('Aus den Betrieben') was introduced in the *SB* from early 1929 onwards. In a speech in the Saxon parliament Fritsch emphasized the SPD's betrayal of the working class by supporting the Young Plan. He elaborated: "The concentration of foreign capital in Germany and the nationalization and concentration of industries will lead to more and more closures of these industries. Currently we experience in Zwickau - you all know this too - that there are three factories whose chimneys do not smoke any more: the Zwickau vehicle factory, the chemical factory Dr. Ebert and the Zwickau founding factory. You are aware that the Audi factory is going to lay off, you are aware, that the Horchwerke will close. These are important symptoms which will increase in the future, which will not stand alone, and which will lead to an incredible worsening and slavery for the German worker" (VdSL, 4. Wp, 11. Sitzung, 23.10.1929, pp. 374 ff.). A Nazi in Leipzig was excluded from the party because he was a strike-breaker during the strike of the local lorry drivers in early 1930 (*SB*, 5.3.1930). The Nazis reported about the disputes between Social Democrats and Communists in the workers' gymnast club Jahn in Chemnitz. They blamed Marxist officials for the divisions of the working class, and predicted that workers would eventually join the NSDAP (*ibid.*, Nr. 86, 5.6.1930). The NSDAP supported a KPD motion to protest against the decrease in unemployment benefits in the town council of Plauen (*ibid.*, Nr. 38, 22.9.1929).

<sup>396</sup> NSDAP members who worked in the building, metal, or textile industry in the district of Chemnitz were asked to report if they were member of a trade union and where their work place and party branch were (*ibid.*, 12.3.1930).

<sup>397</sup> The Saxon intelligence service reported in September 1930: "Recently it was observed that the NSDAP, like the KPD, also attempts to attract the unemployed for its aims. This caused several sharp clashes and fights between Communists and National Socialists in front of employment offices (STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, September 1930).

<sup>398</sup> See 'Unser Kampf in Leipzig', *SB*, Nr. 92, 13.6.1930.

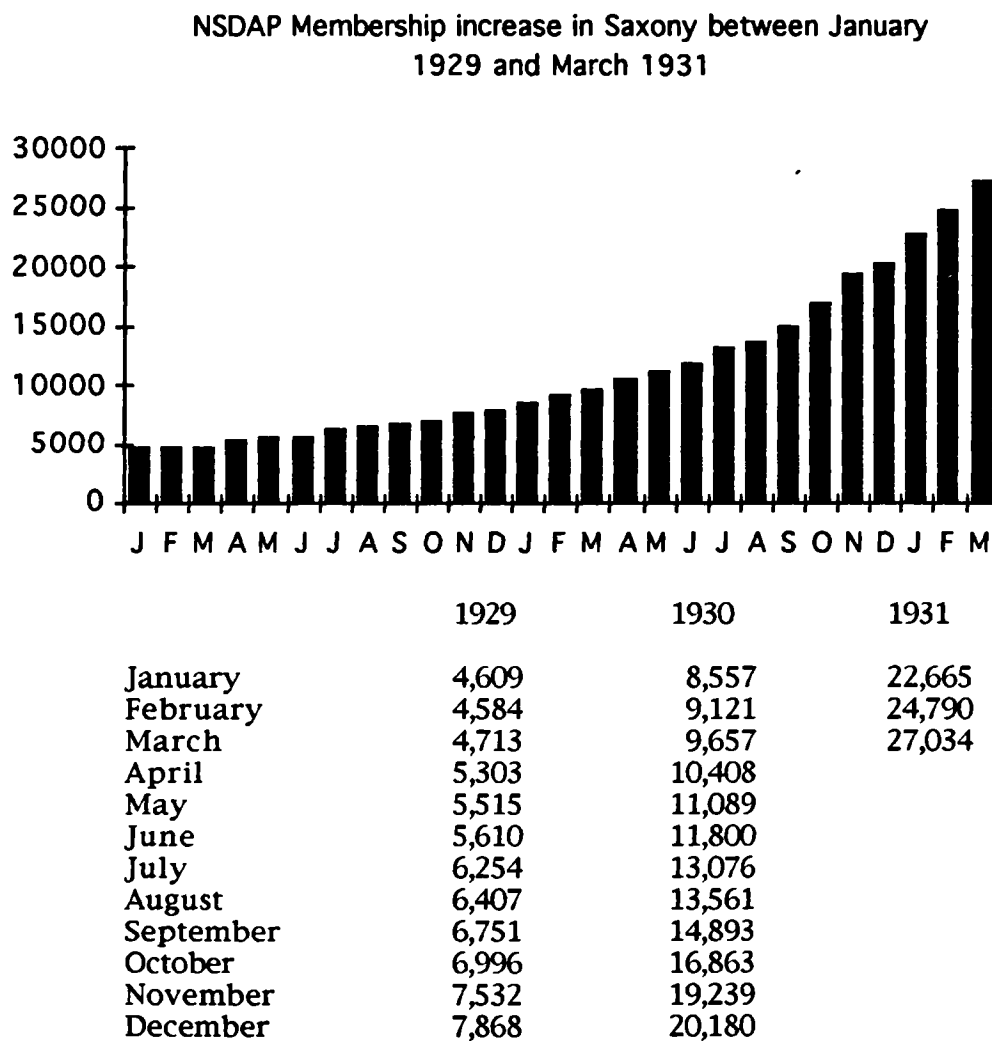
<sup>399</sup> See *FK*, Nr. 88, 12.11.1930.

<sup>400</sup> In early 1929 the Nazis in Chemnitz described themselves as "a small bunch of old and proven fighters, most of whom had become disillusioned because of the set-backs." The May 1929 state elections brought them only 600 more votes than in 1928. However, the Nazis were rewarded for their continued activities by a great electoral increase in the referendum against



organisational base of the NSDAP<sup>401</sup>, and safeguarded the personal tie of new party members with the growing movement. The Nazis

Figure 3:



Source: BA, NS 22, Nr. 1067.

in Chemnitz reported that they brought new visitors who had attended big party rallies into small internal party meetings. They

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the Young Plan and the municipal elections later that year (see 'Ein Jahr Kampf in Chemnitz!', *SB*, Nr. 98, 20.6.1930).

<sup>401</sup> *FK*, Nr. 87, 11.11.1930.

were greeted by handshakes and everyone was encouraged to contribute to the discussions which were led by local speakers.<sup>402</sup>

A striking feature of the Saxon NSDAP remained the enormous extent of their activities, which doubled from 1929 to 1930.<sup>403</sup> At the end of 1930 Nazis from the district 'Upper Elbe' reported that the number of meetings was even higher than during the campaign for the *Reichstag* elections in September 1930.<sup>404</sup> The increase in number of meetings ran parallel with an increase of visitors.<sup>405</sup> The Nazis tried to win new territory by swamping small areas with

Table 7: Increase of NSDAP members, voters, and the number of its public meetings between May 1929, June 1930, and September 1930 (increase in percentage in brackets)

	May 1929	June 1930	September 1930
members	5,515	11,800 (46.7)	14,893 (8.0)
voters	133,958	376,769 (64.4)	561,371 (32.9)
meetings <sup>1</sup>	12	45 (73.3)	51 (11.8)

<sup>1</sup>: NSDAP meetings in the AH Schwarzenberg between April-May 1929, May-June 1930, August-September 1930.

Source: *StJbSa*, (1929-30); BA Koblenz; STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1942-1943.

leaflets, meetings and parades<sup>406</sup>, and active local party branches spread the movement<sup>407</sup>. Between 1929 and 1930 the Nazis experienced most success in increasing the amount of propaganda

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<sup>402</sup> *SB*, 8/9.3.1930.

<sup>403</sup> E.g. the NSDAP of Leipzig and surrounding area organised thirty-two public meetings in 1929, and sixty-two in 1930 (*FK*, Nr. 18, 22.1.1931).

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 91, 15.11.1930.

<sup>405</sup> E.g. the Nazis in Rochlitz reported great demand to purchase tickets for a meeting with Gregor Strasser in March 1930 (*SB*, Nr. 8, 23.2.1930).

<sup>406</sup> E.g. four prominent speakers spoke in three big meetings on one day in Leipzig (*ibid.*, 23.4.1930). The Nazis held twelve meetings around Gaschwitz/KH Leipzig on one Sunday in late 1930 (see 'Großkampfsontag of the district Leipzig around Gaschwitz', *FK*, Nr. 102, 29.11.1930).

<sup>407</sup> E.g. the branch in Borstendorf organised forty public meetings in 1929. The *Gauleitung* organised a meeting with Gregor Strasser in January 1930 which led the foundation for meetings in three neighbouring villages and the creation of a party branch in Schellenberg (*SB*, 12.3.1930).

and the number of their electorate. They were able to attract new members, but not to the same extent (see Table 7 above).

At the heart of the expansion of the Saxon NSDAP stood *Gauleiter* Mutschmann, who was extremely determined and ruthless in establishing his personal control in the state. His complaint to the headquarters in Munich about the creation of a NSDAP insurance group in East Saxony was typical: "If the *Gauleiter* should be solely responsible for his own *Gau* it is intolerable that a post is set up without his preceding involvement and about whose existence he will only hear as an established fact."<sup>408</sup> He appointed loyal followers to important positions in the *Gau*, and his strong hold over the movement prevented his *Gau* - as happened in several other cases - from being divided into smaller *Gaue*.<sup>409</sup> However, Mutschmann's control was far from complete at the time. In February 1929 he inquired in Munich whether Hitler had approved the fact that Tittmann and the other NSDAP members of parliament missed the chance of bringing down the Saxon government in a vote of no confidence.<sup>410</sup>

The growth of the Nazi movement was facilitated by an increasing disintegration of the rest of the far right<sup>411</sup>, and their growing co-operation with the Nazis from 1929 onwards.<sup>412</sup> The most

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<sup>408</sup> BA, SlSch, Nr. 208, Band 1, Gau Sachsen an Reichsleitung, 16.9.1929

<sup>409</sup> E.g. the *Gau* Ruhr was divided into *Gau* Essen, *Gau* Düsseldorf, and *Gau* Westfalen in October 1928 (A. Tyrell, *Führer befiehlt... Selbstzeugnisse aus der 'Kampfzeit' der NSDAP* (Neuaufgabe, Leipzig, 1991), pp. 373-376).

<sup>410</sup> The vote ended 47:47. Because both Nazis had abstained, the government survived (BDC, Tittmann, OPG, Mutschmann an Uschla, 25.2.1929).

<sup>411</sup> E.g. three DNVP members of the town council in Freiberg joined the NSDAP at the end of 1929 (SB, Nr. 44, 3.11.1929). A prominent Jungdo leader, von Tschammer und Osten, joined the NSDAP in Dresden in March 1930 (ibid., 5.3.1930).

<sup>412</sup> E.g. the police reported about co-operation between the *Stahlhelm* and NSDAP in various places of the KH Dresden in March 1930 (STA D, KH Dresden, Nr. 264, März 1930). The NSDAP and Wehrwolf campaigned together

prominent example was when NSDAP, Stahlhelm, DNVP and other conservative groups fought together in the campaign for the referendum against the Young plan at the end of 1929.<sup>413</sup> The NSDAP assumed leadership of the campaign in the streets, while the parties on the right helped with office work. The bourgeois parties and groups too, started to co-operate with the NSDAP.<sup>414</sup> At the same time the Nazis increasingly attempted to infiltrate bourgeois organisations.<sup>415</sup> The slow rapprochement between the NSDAP and the bourgeoisie was also reflected in the style of the *SB* and later *FK*, whose section 'Our Fight in Saxony' became much more moderate and lost its inflammatory style in 1930. While the crisis deepened and the NSDAP advanced, not only the far right, but also the left started to disintegrate.<sup>416</sup>

Despite the breakthrough of the NSDAP as a mass movement in Saxony in 1930, the party continued to be hampered by severe limits. Most importantly, the movement continued to have a weak

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in one list during the *Asta* elections at the University of Leipzig in February 1930 (ibid., Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, February-March 1930). The *SB* introduced a section 'Wehrwolf. Bundesnachrichten' in early 1930 (e.g. see *SB*, 4.3.1930).

<sup>413</sup> In the electoral district of Leipzig the following organisations allied during the anti-Young campaign: DNVP, Stahlhelm, NSDAP, SLV, *Deutscher Offiziersbund*, *Nationalverband Deutscher Offiziere*, *Gesellschaft der Freunde des Stahlhelms*, *Deutsche Adelsgenossenschaft*, *Bund Königin Luise*, *Verband Sächsischer Arbeiter und Werkvereine im RvA*, *Alldeutscher Verband*, *Schützengesellschaft*, *Kolonialer Jugendbund*. The local police noted that the NSDAP was most active in the campaign, and that NSDAP meetings were attended by many members of the Stahlhelm (STA L, PP-St, Nr. 31).

<sup>414</sup> E.g. the bourgeois parties supported the NSDAP's motion to cancel their links with consumer associations in the town council of Oelsnitz/Erzgebirge (*SB*, Nr. 1/2.3.1930). The town council in Zwickau supported a NSDAP motion to make the *SB* official newspaper of the municipal services (ibid., 3.3.1930). The Nazis reported that the alliance of small pensioners in Löbau (*Kleinrentnerbund*), which had been affiliated with the DVP, decided to join the local NSDAP in late 1930 (*FK*, Nr. 96, 22.11.1930).

<sup>415</sup> E.g. several Nazis worked in the 'National Emergency Aid', which was set up by nationalist organisations as response to the KPD's 'Red Aid' (STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, Oktober 1930).

<sup>416</sup> E.g. the Communist leader of the district of Zwickau joined the SPD in May 1930 because he regarded the official party line as harmful for the working class (ibid., Mai 1930).

party network and electoral support outside south-western Saxony, particularly in eastern Saxony.<sup>417</sup> The elections in 1930 showed that the NSDAP continued to score results high above the average in the south-western part of the state. The further east the electoral districts were, the weaker were the results for the NSDAP, particularly in rural areas.<sup>418</sup> However, even this limitation was partially overcome by the NSDAP's good performance in the eastern towns of Bautzen and Zittau.<sup>419</sup> The Nazis also faced severe limits in their attempt to infiltrate traditional Marxist strongholds.<sup>420</sup> Areas with a deep-seated organisational network of the traditional Marxist parties, particularly SPD strongholds, like the towns of Freital and Riesa, and the rural AHs of Pirna, Leipzig and Oschatz, remained an organizational desert for the NSDAP. However, the NSDAP managed to make astonishing electoral gains in some old working class strongholds like Chemnitz, Plauen, Werdau, and the AHs Oelsnitz and Plauen which had an extremely high percentage of working-class citizens. The Nazis increasingly challenged the Marxists in their strongholds.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> The Nazis reported about a propaganda tour through the "completely unworked eastern Saxony" in September 1930. "There were villages in which the people had not heard about Hitler" (FK, Nr. 30, 4.9.1930). The NSDAP only had one party branch (Mittweida) and forty-five party members in the AH Mittweida until late 1930 (*Das Nationalsozialistische Sachsen*, pp. 60, 62).

<sup>418</sup> The NSDAP only gained 11.9 per cent of the vote in the AH Zittau, 12.4 per cent in the AH Löbau, and 14.3 per cent in the AH Kamenz and AH Bautzen in the 1930 *Reichstag* elections.

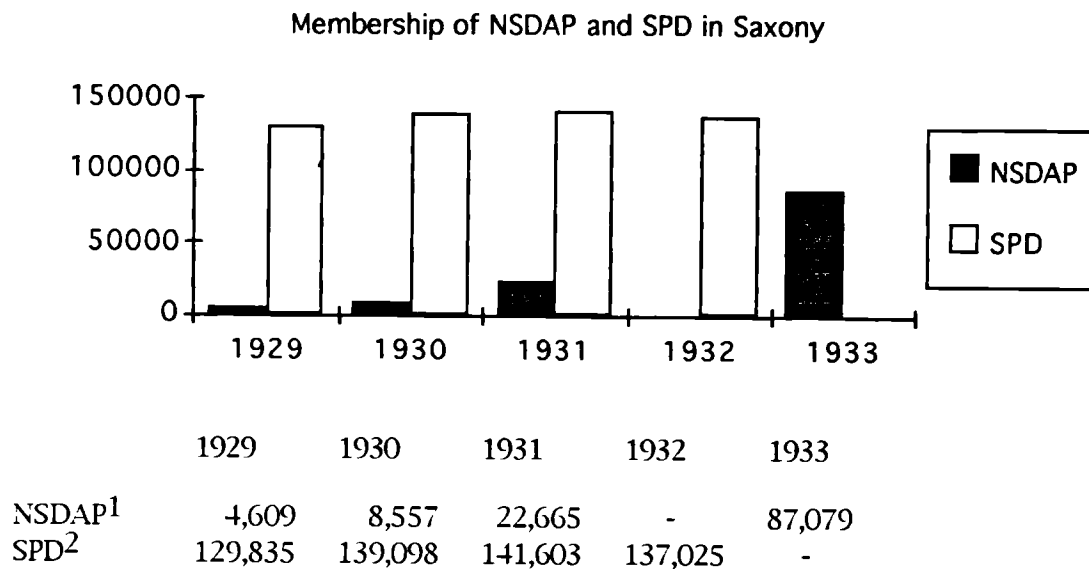
<sup>419</sup> The NSDAP gained 21.7 per cent of the vote in Zittau, and 21.2 per cent in Bautzen in the 1930 *Reichstag* elections.

<sup>420</sup> E.g. a NSDAP meeting in Sebnitz was attended by 600-700 people and had to be dissolved due to disturbances of Marxist visitors, who accounted for eighty per cent of all visitors (SB, Nr. 8, 23.2.1930.) The Nazis reported that they were not able to organise a single meeting in Wilsdruf because landlords would not risk renting them a meeting place because of Marxist threats (FK, Nr. 51, 29.9.1930).

<sup>421</sup> E.g. thirty-four Nazis visited the SPD's anti-Fascist meeting with Severing in Glauchau in March 1930. Overall there were 700-800 visitors.

A clear indications for the growth of the NSDAP was the diminishing significance of Plauen for the party.<sup>422</sup> However, the NSDAP continued to be disrupted by internal disputes<sup>423</sup>, and

Figure 4:



1: all figures are from January (BA, NS 22, Nr. 1067; except January 1933: NSDAP Parteistatistik. 1935). Overall, the NSDAP figures are likely to be too high (see footnote 219).

2: all figures are from 1. Januar of each year from *JbSPD*, (1929-31).

financial difficulties<sup>424</sup>, and there were signs, that the party had lost its drive and aggressiveness at the end of 1930.<sup>425</sup>

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The Nazis started a meeting-room-brawl and injured several Social Democrats (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, Februar-März 1930).

<sup>422</sup> The NSDAP's electorate in Plauen (its overall percentage of the NSDAP's vote in Saxony in brackets): RW 1924II: 7991 (11.8%), RW 1928: 7751 (10.4%), LW 1929: 10408 (7.8%), RW 1930: 22017 (3.9%).

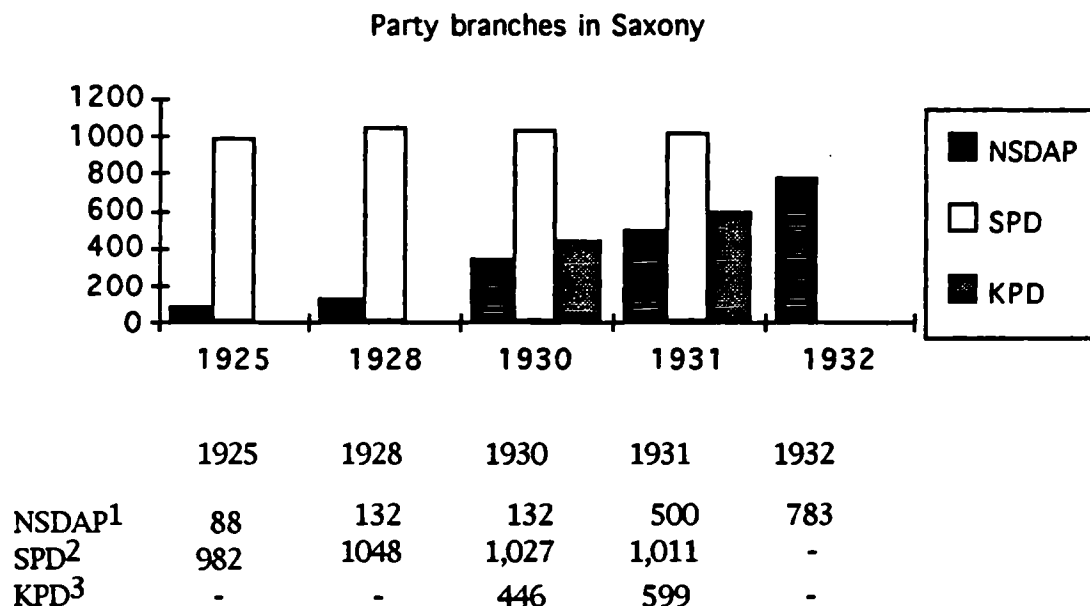
<sup>423</sup> E.g. the NSDAP branch in Glauchau was dissolved due to fierce internal group fighting in August 1930 (ibid., Nr. 19086, NSDAP 1929-32).

<sup>424</sup> The Nazis in Aue reported that they had no money for leaflets to campaign for the elections to the factory councils in early 1930 (SB, 22.3.1930). The Nazis in eastern Saxony reported about their financial difficulties due to the high costs of the election campaigns in 1929. Thereafter they were only able to rent a cheap room which was located a one hour walk away from the town. However, this did not seem to limit their activities (ibid., Nr. 68, 14.5.1930).

<sup>425</sup> *Der Freiheitskampf* appeared dull and with increasingly more advertisement (e.g. nine-and-a-half pages of sixteen on 13.12.1930) at the end of 1930. Overall there was surprisingly little about the economic crisis.

Overall, it is important to see the organisation and activities of the Saxon NSDAP in perspective. The Nazis' political plans had received a bitter rejection in the state parliament and they were condemned to the opposition benches in Dresden. It is true that the party had become the most active political force, however, compared with the mighty SPD organisation it was still only a small affair (see Figures 4 above and 5 below). The NSDAP had about one-quarter the

Figure 5:



1: NSDAP Parteistatistik, 1935 (except 1931: *FK*, Nr. 109, 12.5.1931).

2: all figures are from 31.12. of each year from *JbSPD*, (1926-31).

3: 1.1.1930: *ZPA*, I 3/8-10/158; 1.1.1931: *ZPA*, I 3/8-10/148.

number of party branches that the SPD had in Saxony by the end of 1930, and the NSDAP's affiliated organisations were still extremely small. E.g. there were only 673 NSF members' in Saxony in 1930<sup>426</sup>, and the HJ only had 1,428 members in early 1931<sup>427</sup>. However,

<sup>426</sup> Stephenson, *Nazi Women*, p. 59. The figure seems particularly small compared with the 32997 women organised in the local SPD (*JbSPD* 1930).

<sup>427</sup> Stachura, *Nazi Youth*, Appendix VIII.

there were also signs that the NSDAP was seriously challenging the SPD's dominance on the party organisational front in some areas.<sup>428</sup>

(v) Were the Saxon Nazis left wing? The formation of the government in Saxony after the state elections in May 1929

The winning of five seats in the May 1929 state elections catapulted the Nazis into the political limelight, and gave them the key position in Saxon's parliament between the blocks of the bourgeoisie and the Left. However, the question of whether to participate in a coalition government or to remain in opposition, suddenly exposed fundamental disagreements between two different strands within the NSDAP. The so-called 'Nazi Left' underlined its belief in a true revolutionary struggle and a simultaneous fight against Capitalism and Marxism, while the 'right wing' of the NSDAP tried to use the opportunity to prove to the bourgeois parties its ability to work in a coalition.<sup>429</sup>

Traditionally, historians argued that there was a 'left wing' within the NSDAP which shared certain ideas which stood in sharp contrast to the course followed by Hitler and the party leadership in Munich.<sup>430</sup> The clearest manifestation of the 'Nazi Left' was the

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<sup>428</sup> This was particularly so in south-western Saxony. E.g. the SPD district of Annaberg had eighteen party branches and 1218 party members in 1929. These numbers probably declined during the depression. In contrast, the NSDAP's party membership grew from 250 in late 1929, to 545 in 1930, to 1,215 in 1931, and to 1,750 in 1932 in the area (E. L. Lang, 'Kampf und Sieg der Nationalsozialistischen Bewegung im Grenzlandkreis Annaberg/Obererzgebirge', in *Vom silbernen Erzgebirge. Kreis Annaberg* (Band I), p. 224).

<sup>429</sup> See Kühnl, *Die nationalsozialistische Linke, 1925-30* (Meisenheim, 1966), p. 220. The following investigation varies in several aspects with Kühnl's account.

<sup>430</sup> Kühnl described the programme of the 'Nazi Left': 1. an emphasis on anti-capitalism, identification with the interests of employers, the rejection of alliances with the national right; 2. the fight against all kind of imperialism, and a friendly attitude towards Russia; 3. the demand for an extra-parliamentarian, 'revolutionary' fight, and the rejection of Hitler's



existence of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Nord und Westdeutschen Gaue* (AG) during 1925-26, and the left wing *Kampfverlag* under the leadership of Gregor and Otto Strasser from 1926 onwards. Recently this traditional interpretation of a 'Nazi Left' was challenged by Peter Stachura, who underlined the great divisions within the AG<sup>431</sup>, and concluded that "the whole idea of a 'Nazi Left' in the NSDAP at this time has little meaning" because such an "identifiable entity within the party did not exist."<sup>432</sup>

Despite the lack of a detailed study about the NSDAP in Saxony, historians have traditionally described the local Nazis as heavily influenced by the party's left wing.<sup>433</sup> The official NSDAP *Gau* newspapers in Saxony, the *NSfS* and later *SB*, were published by the *Kampfverlag*.<sup>434</sup> Otto Strasser, who became the most significant representative of the left within the NSDAP at the end of the 1920s, was the editor of the *Kampfverlag* and used his position to put forward his radical national socialist, and revolutionary ideas in north and middle Germany.<sup>435</sup> Additionally, Gregor Strasser's attachment to Saxony became clear on many occasions<sup>436</sup>, and even

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'legal' course which aimed at coalitions with the bourgeois parties (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, pp. 54-55).

<sup>431</sup> P. D. Stachura, *Gregor Strasser and the Rise of Nazism* (London, 1983), pp. 45, 48.

<sup>432</sup> Stachura, *Gregor Strasser*, p. 49.

<sup>433</sup> Kühnl described the Nazis in Saxony within the 'sphere of influence' of the AG from 1925 onwards (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 17). Schildt writes about a friendly relationship between Mutschmann and the AG (G. Schildt, 'Die Arbeitsgemeinschaft Nord-West. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der NSDAP 1925-26' (PhD Freiburg, 1964), pp. 123-124).

<sup>434</sup> *Der Nationalsozialist* came into being in March 1926, and was published in five different regional issues, one of which was Saxony (*NSfS*). Kühnl argued that the *SB*, the successor of the *NSfS*, was published with the special wish of Mutschmann (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 4).

<sup>435</sup> Kühnl analysed: "The Kampfverlag's press stood in one front with the Marxists' during every labour dispute, during every protest against price rises, and against the dismantling of the social services" (ibid., p. 192).

<sup>436</sup> E.g. Gregor Strasser said in Plauen in mid-1930: "My heart and my work is particularly attached to Gau Saxony" (*SB*, Nr. 84, 3.6.1930). He was the most

the jealous Goebbels acknowledged that Saxony was Gregor Straßer's "domain".<sup>437</sup> Gregor Strasser was seen as one of the main proponents of the 'left wing' within the NSDAP, and was the second most powerful Nazi leader until he left the party after his dispute with Hitler at the end of 1932. The NSDAP's 'left wing' felt particularly attached to Saxony due to its large working-class population. This became most evident after the state elections in May 1929 and June 1930, and during the strike of the metal workers in April 1930. And lastly, Kurt Gruber's HJ in Plauen<sup>438</sup>, as well as Wilhelm Tempel's NSDStB in Leipzig<sup>439</sup>, held strong social revolutionary beliefs.

However, Stachura convincingly refuted Gregor Straßer's role as champion of a 'Nazi Left' after 1928.<sup>440</sup> The radical left wing voice of the *Kampfverlag's* *SB* reflected only one side of the political outlook of the NSDAP in Saxony in the 1920s.<sup>441</sup> As in most other regions, the local NSDAP made attempts to woo the working classes and middle classes (most of the ancillary groups aimed to attract middle class support; most NSDAP members came from the middle classes before 1929). Saxony was a region where the influences of

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frequent speaker of the NSDAP leadership in Saxony, attempted to become Minister of the Interior in Saxony in 1930, and represented the electoral district of Dresden-Bautzen in the 1930 *Reichstag* elections.

<sup>437</sup> Fröhlich, *Tagebücher Goebbels*, 1930 V 14.

<sup>438</sup> Stachura assessed: "Gruber was instrumental in infusing the HJ with his own social revolutionary ideals" (Stachura, *Nazi Youth*, pp. 52).

<sup>439</sup> Stachura wrote: "Tempel sought to give the NSDStB a leftist direction which only incurred the disapprobation of Hitler and led to Tempel's dismissal in July 1928" (ibid., p. 54).

<sup>440</sup> Stachura, *Gregor Strasser*, pp. 10, 77.

<sup>441</sup> The *NSfS* became the official Saxon *Gau* newspaper after a decision at the party meeting in Weimar in summer 1927, replacing the '*Völkischen Nachrichten*' from Plauen (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/1, Juni 1927). The fact that the decision was made in Weimar, and that many Saxon Nazis already read the *NSfS* (e.g. *NSfS*, Nr. 23, 8.8.1926) suggests that Mutschmann had no other option than accepting the *Kampfverlag's* paper as official *Gau* newspaper.

the Munich party leadership and that of the AG, and later the circle around Otto Strasser, came together. Prominent Nazis who spoke in the state after 1925 were a mix between 'left wing' and 'right wing' activists. Saxony had never been a member of the AG, and Mutschmann did not attend any of its meetings. Mutschmann was never a true friend of the Strasser brothers<sup>442</sup>, and must have felt uneasy about their interest in his *Gau*. He exploited Gregor Strasser's powerful position within the NSDAP to strengthen his own influence in Saxony, and did not hesitate to turn against the influential 'competitor' as soon as an opportunity arose.<sup>443</sup>

Heavily industrialized Saxony with its marxist strongholds produced many "national socialists who, in addition to their nationalism, cherished notions of a new socialist order of society."<sup>444</sup> Mutschmann was influenced by this environment too. However, as a textile industrialist who was increasingly threatened by the process of modernisation and the gains made by the organised working class, he did not champion a 'socialist revolution'. He was a fierce supporter of a 'national revolution' which would sweep away with the 'November system'. Above all, Mutschmann was an extreme opportunist and used every chance to

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<sup>442</sup> As Kühnl admits himself (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 52).

<sup>443</sup> Goebbels wrote in early June 1930 that Mutschmann and Dönicke, the leader of Leipzig, "were against Strasser" (Fröhlich, *Tagebücher Goebbels*, 1930 VI 3). This was probably a result of the *Kampfverlag's* support for the metal workers' strike in April. Additionally, Mutschmann rallied behind Hitler in Berchtesgaden during the dispute with G. Strasser at the end of 1932 (ibid., 1932 XII 29). Mutschmann called Strasser a "Jew" and "Judas" at the conference of the *Gauleiter* in January 1933 (ibid., 1933 I 17). The fact that Mutschmann was in Berchtesgaden in late 1932 supports Jordan's account that Hitler sent Mutschmann to Gregor Strasser to bring the latter back into the party (R. Jordan, *Erlebt und Erlitten. Weg eines Gauleiters von München bis Moskau* (Leoni am Starnberger See, 1971), p. 90). Mutschmann, who knew Strasser well and was a loyal Hitler supporter, seemed to be the ideal person to do this.

<sup>444</sup> Stachura, *Nazi Youth*, p. 52.

assert his leadership over the Saxon movement. After the 1928 *Reichstag* elections, which were disappointing for the NSDAP even in working-class Saxony, he followed the re-orientation of the Munich leadership and put most emphasis onto the middle classes. Clear evidence for this was the appointment of Killinger as leader of the parliamentary NSDAP shortly after the state elections in May 1929.<sup>445</sup> Despite his often radical rhetoric, Killinger pursued a slow rapprochement with the bourgeois parties. The local Nazis increased their anti-Marxist activities<sup>446</sup> and their readiness to work together with other organisations on the right.<sup>447</sup>

The events after the May 1929 elections showed that the local NSDAP was firmly on Hitler's line. The negotiations for the formation of the new government were extremely complicated as the Left (SPD and KPD) had forty-five seats, while the bourgeois parties had forty-six seats. The Nazis tipped the scale between both groups with their five seats. There was a great deal of perplexity and uncertainty about a possible coalition government. Several different candidates unsuccessfully competed in the state parliament in the first two elections for the post of Minister President on 18 and 20 June.<sup>448</sup> The confusion only ended when the Nazis made it clear that they would only support a completely 'marxist-free government' with Wilhelm Büniger, member of the

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<sup>445</sup> Kühnl's view that Killinger replaced Mücke after the latter resigned from the party in early July that year is wrong (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 222). Mücke had already resigned his seat in the previous parliamentary session and was not even a candidate for the May 1929 state elections.

<sup>446</sup> E.g. the Nazis and Communists opposed the appointment of Weckel, a Social Democrat, as president of the parliament in June 1929 (*SB*, Nr. 24, 16.6.1929). It was not common, even for opposition parties, to obstruct the candidate of the strongest parliamentary party at the election to this post.

<sup>447</sup> E.g. the *Wehrwolf* co-operated in the NSDAP's campaign for the state elections in May 1929 (Stachura, *Gregor Strasser*, p. 75).

<sup>448</sup> See *VdSL*, 4. Wp, 2. Sitzung, 18.6.1929, and *ibid.*, 3. Sitzung, 20.6.1929.

DVP, as Prime Minister.<sup>449</sup> Before this offer, the Nazis had not been approached by the parties on the middle and right regarding the formation of the government.<sup>450</sup> This was due to the radical anti-parliamentarian agitation in the *SB*. With their sudden change of tactics the Nazis clearly determined the agenda from 20 June onwards. Their influence was decisive for the appointment of the Prime Minister and his cabinet. Büniger, who had only received one, and then seven votes in the first two ballots, was elected Prime Minister with forty-four votes on 25 June.<sup>451</sup> Hitler instructed Mücke, one of the most prominent Saxon Nazis with a personal link to him, to negotiate the formation of a new government with Büniger.<sup>452</sup> Mücke wrote to Büniger the day after he was elected Prime Minister. The content of the letter is not clear, but there are two possibilities. The first is, that Mücke demanded the Ministry of the Interior for his party in exchange for supporting Büniger's coalition government. Indeed, a week later the Nazis indicated in parliament that they would be interested in this post (see Appendix 1). It is interesting that the Saxon Nazis also thought of Wilhelm Frick, who became the Minister of Interior and Culture between January 1930 and April 1931 in Thuringia, as their

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<sup>449</sup> See 'Vor der Regierungsbildung in Sachsen', *Crimmitschauer Anzeiger und Tagblatt*, Nr. 143, 22/23.6.29.

<sup>450</sup> See 'Unsere Politik im Landtag', *SB*, Nr. 28, 14.7.1929.

<sup>451</sup> *VdSL*, 4 Wp, 4. Sitzung, 25.6.1929. The five Nazis voted for Büniger (Killinger 'Unsere Politik im Landtag', *SB*, Nr. 28, 14.7.1929). The election of Büniger with forty-four votes was only possible because the KPD handed in blank ballot papers.

<sup>452</sup> See 'Lügen-Nazis!', *SVB*, Nr. 184, 8.8.1929. Hitler was involved in the NSDAP's coalition negotiations from the start. The *Neue Leipziger Zeitung* (Nr. 153) reported on 2.6.1929 that a planned meeting between Hitler and the five NSDAP members of the Saxon state parliament from the day before was re-scheduled to the following week.

candidate for the post (see Appendix 1).<sup>453</sup> However, it is very unlikely that the Nazis demanded the post at that time in Saxony. Their five per cent of the votes were a far less powerful position to bargain as the 11.3 per cent of their colleagues in Thuringia half a year later. The combined opposition of SPD, KPD, ASPD, and DDP against Nazi participation in a government would have ended Büniger's time as Prime Minister very quickly. When the Nazis boasted in the state parliament: "We do not want a post as minister! We do not attach importance to it!"<sup>454</sup> they merely expressed something out of their reach anyhow.<sup>455</sup> The fact that the Nazis were not prepared to accept anything less than the important Ministry of the Interior<sup>456</sup>, makes it unlikely that the Saxon Nazis demanded any post in Büniger's government at all. The more realistic possibility is that Mücke put forward similar conditions to Büniger, as those the Nazis proclaimed a week later in Parliament (see Appendix 1). Indeed, Büniger complied to all immediate Nazi demands by not appointing a Democrat as Minister of the Interior or Culture, and creating a 'complete marxist-free' government by leaving the ASPD out of the government. Büniger's only hope of establishing a majority government, despite the different wishes from the various bourgeois parties, was to appoint two 'neutral' civil servants as Minister of the Interior and Minister

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<sup>453</sup> Frick was Hitler's choice. This supports the argument that the Saxon NSDAP was firmly on the line of the leadership in Munich.

<sup>454</sup> *VdSL*, 4. Wp, 6. Sitzung, 9. Juli 1929, p. 145.

<sup>455</sup> This argument thus disagrees with Kühnl's view that the Saxon Nazis did not enter a bourgeois coalition government because of a compromise with the left-wing of the party (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 222).

<sup>456</sup> F. Dickmann, 'Die Regierungsbildung in Thüringen als Modell der Machtergreifung. Ein Brief Hitlers aus dem Jahre 1930', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 14 (4) (1966), pp. 454-464.

of Justice.<sup>457</sup> Additionally, Büniger took over the Ministry of Culture, a post which traditionally caused heated disputes between different political groups. The *LVZ* commented: "Never in the history of the Saxon parliament stood a government on such shaky feet than that of *Herrn* Büniger who is totally dependent on the Swastika party."<sup>458</sup> The radicalization of politics, and the growing importance of the Nazi Party led to the first severe crack in the 'conventional' running of the parliamentary system in Saxony.

The Nazi parliamentarians were quick to justify their toleration of the new bourgeois coalition government under Büniger<sup>459</sup>, and warned to abandon their support as soon as Büniger acted against the "interest of the German people".<sup>460</sup> Opportunist reasons made it necessary to keep a distance from the government and left the door open for the Nazis to withdraw their support whenever they wished. Additionally, the 'limited' backing of the bourgeois government was to appease those Nazis who rejected an alliance with bourgeois parties.

The *Kampfverlag* was not prepared for the election success in Saxony in May 1929, and had no clear strategy about what to do with their powerful position in parliament. They had frequently discussed the necessity of an alliance with the working classes, but had never put this into practice.<sup>461</sup> The day after the elections the

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<sup>457</sup> See Büniger's government statement (*VdSL*, 4. Wp, 5. Sitzung, 4. Juli 1929, pp. 88 ff.).

<sup>458</sup> *LVZ*, Nr. 158, 10.7.1929.

<sup>459</sup> Killinger explained that Büniger had met their demands by excluding the Democrats, and that they were confident that their other conditions would be met. He elaborated then: "The National Socialist managed to put together a cabinet that has no red Prime Minister for the first time since the revolution" (see 'Unsere Politik im Landtag', *SB*, Nr. 28, 14.7.1929).

<sup>460</sup> *VdSL*, 4. Wp, 6. Sitzung, 9. Juli, p. 146.

<sup>461</sup> Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 220.

*SB* emphasized the Nazis' revolutionary ideals, their rejection of alliances with the *Bürgertum* or Marxists, and their aim to exploit their position on a day to day basis.<sup>462</sup> However, although the *SB* continued to proclaim its hatred against the system and the aim to overthrow it ('*Katastrophenpolitik*'), there were also clear indications that it would tolerate a Marxist government if it fulfilled the Nazis' socialist demands.<sup>463</sup> For several weeks the articles in the *SB* wavered between their radical revolutionary strategy and the toleration of a Marxist government.<sup>464</sup> It is not clear to what extent this was a tactical move to reconcile the *SB*'s claim to represent the interest of the working class, or a serious offer of an alliance with the traditional parties on the Left. Which ever it was, the political reality quickly shattered any possibility of an alliance between the NSDAP and the Marxist parties, and showed how senseless the *Kampfverlag*'s position was in the parliamentary system. While the 'Nazi Right' in Saxony was able to exploit the NSDAP's position in parliament by allying with the bourgeois forces and working for a future participation in government, the 'Nazi Left' was politically isolated and had nothing to offer.

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<sup>462</sup> See 'Sieg als Verpflichtung. Ein Nachwort zur Sachsenwahl' (signed by G. Strasser, but written by his brother Otto), *SB*, Nr. 20, 19.5.1929.

<sup>463</sup> The *SB* made clear to support a Marxist government under certain conditions: "A government (SPD government) would have our absolute support, if it lifted the ban of the *Rotfrontkämpferbund* ... supported our nationalization of advertising, and demanded the all-out eight-hour day" (ibid., Nr. 21, 26.5.1929). Two weeks later Otto Strasser claimed to support everything that helped to destroy the existing order because the collapse of the liberal system would clear the way for a National Socialist revolution ('*Katastrophenpolitik*'). However, in another article in the same edition the Nazis repeated their conditions to support an SPD government. If these conditions were met, the Nazis claimed they "would certainly be prepared to support such a labour government" (ibid., Nr. 23, 9.6.1929).

<sup>464</sup> Kühnl argued that the *SB* rejected any coalition with the Left or the Right after the state election in Saxony in May 1929 (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 220).



This became evident when the left wing Mücke wrote a letter to the leader of the parliamentary faction of the SPD and KPD on 29 June, and offered to support a Marxist government if it met the demands of the NSDAP (see Appendix 2). When the KPD, and then the SPD, publicized Mücke's secret offer<sup>465</sup> and caused embarrassment for the Nazi leadership, the parliamentary party in Saxony quickly distanced itself from Mücke, and described it as a personal move by him.<sup>466</sup> Mücke, who was no longer even a member of the state parliament, and whose only power base was his link with Hitler, had no choice but to resign from the party. In a series of articles he blamed *Gauleiter* Mutschmann indirectly for the right wing course of the local NSDAP.<sup>467</sup> It seems clear that Hitler and the Saxon parliamentary party knew about Mücke's secret letter to the SPD and KPD.<sup>468</sup> Several reasons explain why Mücke approached the Marxists, and why the NSDAP leadership tolerated Mücke's move. First of all, the Nazis hoped to increase the pressure on Büniger by contacting the Marxists.<sup>469</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>465</sup> See 'Der Streit um den Brief', *SVB*, Nr. 153, 4.7.1929.

<sup>466</sup> *VdSL*, 4. Wp, 6. Sitzung, 9. Juli 1929, p. 146.

<sup>467</sup> Mücke also accused Hitler of having broken promises to him on several occasions due to the intervention of Mutschmann, and that Hitler was financially dependent on Mutschmann. He explained his resignation because of the entry of Killinger into the NSDAP (see 'Enthüllungen über die Hitler-Partei', *SVB*, Nr. 180, 4.8.1929).

<sup>468</sup> Hitler admitted that he knew about Mücke's action (*VB*, 10.7.1929).

<sup>469</sup> Büniger was informed about Mücke's intention to contact the Marxist parties (see 'Lügen-Nazis', *SVB*, Nr. 184, 8.8.1929). However, Mücke's claim that it gave the Nazis an alternative in case no majority was found on the right, is not convincing (*ibid.*). The bitter divisions between the KPD and SPD excluded any realistic chance of a Marxist government in Saxony. Additionally, the Saxon DVP was opposed to any alliance with the SPD, and the SPD faction would not have been able to justify a NSDAP toleration before its constituency. Mücke's letter indicated that the Nazis were worried about a possible ban of the SA (the Communist paramilitary *Rotfrontkämpferbund* had been banned in Prussia and most other states on 6 May 1929). It is unlikely, however, that this made Hitler seriously consider an alliance with the Marxists (Tyrell, *Führer befahl*, p. 308). This has to be seen rather as a single issue on which the NSDAP wanted to co-operate with the Marxists.

Mücke himself was a left wing supporter within the NSDAP<sup>470</sup>, and preferred to tolerate a Marxist rather than a bourgeois government. This line was shared by some voices in the *SB* during the first weeks after the elections. The fact that the Nazi leadership tolerated Mücke's approach to the Marxists, also expressed the sensitivity of the leadership to the feelings of the 'left wing' within the party. After the publication of Mücke's letter embarrassed the NSDAP leadership, Hitler explained angrily that there was never any intention to go into an alliance with the "Marxist plague". The offer was only made to prevent a situation in which the "red demagogues will wrongly accuse them of willingly tolerating a bourgeois government in Saxony and representing 'capitalist interests'."<sup>471</sup>

In fact, the Marxists intention to harm the Nazis backfired because it sealed the fate of the 'socialist' Nazis. As soon as the scandal erupted Mutschmann exploited the situation, strengthened his control<sup>472</sup>, and brought the Saxony NSDAP even more onto 'mainstream' party line. The party's programme for the local municipal elections at the end of the year changed from a socialist revolutionary one in July, to a much more moderate and bourgeois oriented one only two months later.<sup>473</sup> Additionally, the

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<sup>470</sup> Mücke was a supporter of the AG and participated at its conference in Harburg on 7.9.1924 (W. Jochmann, *Nationalsozialismus und Revolution. Ursprung und Geschichte der NSDAP in Hamburg 1922-1933. Dokumente* (Frankfurt, 1960), p. 147).

<sup>471</sup> VB, 10.7.1929.

<sup>472</sup> Mutschmann was more than happy to get rid of Mücke, one of his formerly fiercest competitors for the leadership over the local NSDAP (e.g. in 1927 Mücke had failed to establish *Gau* East Saxony; see 'Helmuth von Mückes Führerpersönlichkeit', (C. Meyer), *SB*, Nr. 34, 25.8.1929).

<sup>473</sup> Compare the NSDAP's July programme with its October programme (*ibid.*, Nr. 30, 28.7.1929; *ibid.*, Nr. 40, 6.10.1929). During the campaign the Nazis concentrated most of their propaganda on the middle classes (e.g. see 'Nationalsozialistische Kommunalpolitik', *ibid.*, Nr. 42, 20.10.1929).

establishment of a Saxon press bureau for the *SB* under Heinrich Bennecke in Dresden was not only a consequence of the growth of the movement, but also a move towards greater independence from the *Kampfverlag's* hold over the *Gau* newspaper.<sup>474</sup> The activities of the Nazis, including their extremely aggressive speeches in the state parliament, were mainly directed against the Marxist parties<sup>475</sup>, and they continued to back the bourgeois government in exchange for concessions from Büniger.<sup>476</sup> The NSDAP's conditions for supporting a bourgeois government led by Schieck in March 1930 (similar to the ones given to Büniger in July 1929), were anti-Marxist, vaguely anti-Capitalist and pro-working class, but also put forward specific demands for the middle classes (see Appendix 1 and 3).

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<sup>474</sup> The control of the *Kampfverlag* over the local content eroded further when the *SB* was published daily from March 1930 onwards. The *SB's* main bureau remained in Dresden and local bureaus were established in Leipzig, Chemnitz, Plauen, Zwickau (STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, Januar 1930).

<sup>475</sup> In October 1929 Killinger warned the Left - in one of the most notorious NSDAP speeches - that "one day the heads of their bigwigs will roll" (*VdSL*, 4. Wp, 11. Sitzung, 23.10.1929, p. 394). In the same session the NSDAP supported the government's motion to abandon the Ninth of November holiday, and brought in an additional motion to abandon the holiday on May the First too. Furthermore, NSDAP members were threatened to be expelled from the party if they visited meetings from other parties during the campaign for the 1930 state election (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 227). This was clearly aimed to prevent NSDAP members from visiting Marxist meetings.

<sup>476</sup> E.g. the NSDAP demanded the closure of the Saxon embassy in Berlin and Munich. Büniger must have closed the second one because the Nazis' demands to Schieck in February 1930 only mentioned the embassy in Berlin (compare Appendix 1 and 3). Lapp writes: "A good example of the delicacy with which the Büniger cabinet treated the NSDAP is provided by the debate over the activities of the National Socialist youth organizations in the Saxon schools. Whereas the SPD demanded a prohibition of the activities of the Nationalsozialistischer Schülerbund (pointing out that the Saxon government had issued a prohibition of the Communist Jungspartakusbund in the Saxon schools in 1927) Büniger refused to take any action against the Nazi youth group: unlike the Communist youth organisations, he argued, the National Socialists were not committed to the violent overthrow of the Republic ... In the same vein, the government removed the Old Socialists' Minister of Labour, Georg Elsner, largely as a result of National Socialist pressure" (Lapp, 'Saxon Bürgertum', pp. 259-260).

(vi) The final defeat of Otto Strasser and the *Kampfverlag*

The events after the state elections in Saxony in May 1929 signalled the beginning of complete defeat for the *Kampfverlag* group and paved the way for the Nazis' first participation in a bourgeois coalition government in Thuringia in January 1930. Frick's appointment as Minister of the Interior and Culture did not lead to an immediate clash between the Otto Strasser group and the Munich leadership because the state had never been in the *Kampfverlag's* sphere of influence. The final show-down took place again over Saxony, because the *Kampfverlag* regarded the state as their domain and felt very sensitive about the increasing challenge of the right. The occasion was provided when Hitler and the *Kampfverlag* disagreed about the position to take towards the strike of the Saxon metalworkers in spring 1930<sup>477</sup>, and soon afterwards, whether to participate in a bourgeois coalition government following another state election in June that year.

The NSDAP, who had helped to topple the Saxon government in May 1930, increased its electorate and demanded the Ministry of the Interior for Gregor Strasser. A fortnight after the election Otto Strasser and a small group of loyal followers broke away from the NSDAP due to their revolutionary and socialist beliefs, and in protest against Hitler's co-operation with the bourgeoisie.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> In April 1930 the *SB* supported the ADGB led strike (e.g. see *SB*, Nr. 67, 13.5.1930). Kühnl writes that the industrial leaders of Saxony responded to this by giving Hitler the ultimatum either officially to condemn the strike and stop the *Kampfverlag's* support of it, or the *Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie* would cease all its payments to the NSDAP. After Hitler was unsuccessful in changing the *Kampfverlag's* supportive attitude to the strike, he saw himself forced to publish a resolution in the *VB* which banned all party members from participating in the strike (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 243).

<sup>478</sup> Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 252. In retrospective it is ironical, that the coalition negotiations failed and that the Saxon Nazis were in fact in opposition to the new bourgeois government.

Overall, the defection of the Otto Strasser group led to little reaction among the local Nazis.<sup>479</sup> However, a few activists expressed their disapproval with the official party line.<sup>480</sup> The most noticeable consequence was that Hitler quickly banned the *SB* as the official NSDAP newspaper.<sup>481</sup> The first edition of Saxony's own *Gau* newspaper, *Der Freiheitskampf*, came out on 1 August 1930.

The group around Otto Strasser lost the battle as soon as it became apparent that the party's new strategy of concentrating on the middle classes was rewarded by election gains for the NSDAP after 1928. The party leadership in Munich was not prepared to endanger this progress by tolerating a group of left wing revolutionaries within the NSDAP. The complete insignificance of Otto Straßer's 'Black Front' organisation in Saxony and Germany as a whole,<sup>482</sup> supports Stachura's thesis that there did not really exist a 'Nazi Left' as a coherent entity. There is a need to re-focus attention away from the group around Otto Strasser at the 'top', and to concentrate more on the background, desire, and role of the masses of NSDAP working class-members at the 'base'.

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<sup>479</sup> E.g. O. Straßer's '*Kampfgemeinschaft Revolutionäre Nationalsozialisten*' appeared to have been even more insignificant in Saxony than elsewhere. (BDC, Strasser, Dr. Otto, p. 43).

<sup>480</sup> At least two Nazi members of the town council in Plauen were excluded from the party (*Volkszeitung für Plauen*, Nr. 155, 7.7.1930). One NSDAP member of the town council in Leipzig left the party too, and the SPD reported about disputes among the NSDAP in Chemnitz (*ChVSt*, Nr. 182, 7.8.1930). Several SA members in Leipzig proclaimed they would continue their fight against bigwigs even within their own party (*Vorwärts*, Nr. 476, 10.10.1930), and in early July 1930 the VB felt the need to confirm that all NSDAP members of the Saxon state parliament supported Hitler (VB, Nr. 159, 6/7.7.1930).

<sup>481</sup> *Volkszeitung für Plauen*, Nr. 151, 2.7.1930.

<sup>482</sup> Not a single Nazi from Saxony signed Otto Straßer's declaration of the creation of the 'Revolutionary National Socialists' (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 297). Otto Straßer's 'Black Front' organisation only attracted a few hundred dissident National Socialists in Germany (Stachura, *Gregor Strasser*, p. 81).

Nazi electoral success depended on flexibility and crude opportunism. *Gauleiter* Mutschmann pursued a flexible path in order to assume complete control in Saxony. From 1926 he used the *Kampfverlag* and the influence of Gregor Strasser as an ideal vehicle to strengthen his position in working-class Saxony. This was also in line with the party strategy until 1928. However, he never completely committed himself to the cause of the 'left wing'. When the Nazis failed to make inroads into the Saxon working classes by the late 1920s<sup>483</sup>, Mutschmann was quick to follow the party leadership by reorientating the movements main focus towards the middle classes.

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<sup>483</sup> E.g. the SA of Zwickau carried out a propaganda trip through several industrial villages on May the First. The locals were taken aback, and "only a few hands were raised". When a Nazi attempted to give a short speech in a market square, he was shouted down (SB, Nr. 23, 9.6.1929).

## 8. The NSDAP as a mass party (1931 and 1932)

### (i) Germany

Between 1931 and 1932 Germany was plunged into a social, political and economic crisis of unprecedented proportions. Minority governments ruled with emergency decrees in the *Reichstag*, and 38 per cent of the total work force were unemployed in early 1932. The capitalist economic system and parliamentary government faced their greatest challenge. The NSDAP grew rapidly and consolidated itself in these years of crisis. Between late 1930 and late 1932 the number of party branches and bases increased from 4,964 to 11,845<sup>484</sup>, and its membership mushroomed to around 500,000<sup>485</sup>. Additionally, the NSDAP was represented in several state governments<sup>486</sup>, and became by far the largest single party by gaining 37.3 per cent of the votes in the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections. The advance of the Nazis seemed unstoppable. However, the party's strategy of gaining power through the electoral process was disappointing. The NSDAP failed to achieve an absolute majority in elections to the *Reichstag*, and Hindenburg, the President, was not willing to appoint Hitler as Chancellor. It is true that the Right "began to base their hopes on the Nazi movement as the means of acquiring mass support"<sup>487</sup>, however, at the same time there were many aspects of the NSDAP

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<sup>484</sup> NSDAP Parteistatistik 1935.

<sup>485</sup> Falter, 'NSDAP Jungmitglieder', p. 209. Diehl estimated the SA membership to be around 77,000 by the end of 1930, and well over half a million by January 1933 (J. M. Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany* (Bloomington, London, 1977), p. 295).

<sup>486</sup> In Thuringia, Braunschweig, Anhalt, Oldenburg, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and Mecklenburg-Strelitz (Tyrell, *Führer befiel*, pp. 384-385).

<sup>487</sup> Noakes/Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 89.

of which the former disapproved: "It was too radical, too violent, its economic policies smacked too much of Socialism, and the characters of some of its leaders were dubious."<sup>488</sup> At the end of 1932 the NSDAP was in a deep crisis. For the first time the Nazis lost votes in the November *Reichstag* elections, the morale of many activists was low, the party faced financial difficulties, and Hitler's all-out demand for the Chancellorship seemed to have manoeuvred them into a dead end.

(ii) Society in Saxony during the years of crisis: radicalization, polarization, and divisions

Tensions came to a head in Saxon society between 1931 and 1932. The economic crisis reached dramatic proportions, the parties increased their activities, the rise in violence grew steadily, and the division within the society widened ever more. The growth of Nazi propaganda stimulated their Marxist opponents to more agitation too. The police reported many well attended meetings and parades of the SPD; the *Reichsbanner* became more active and increased its membership.<sup>489</sup> Meanwhile the KPD tried to attract the unemployed and to increase its influence at the work place.<sup>490</sup> The radical parties benefited from the desperate economic situation. The AH Schwarzenberg reported in July 1931: "The widespread discontentment makes itself felt more and more ... Large sections of society are driven into the hands of the radical parties."<sup>491</sup> More and more people, particularly in south-western Saxony, became convinced that the rise of the NSDAP was inevitable. The same AH

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, Februar 1931.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1944, Juli 1931.



reported in early 1932: "Most people expect that the NSDAP will become the strongest of all political parties in due course, and that the party will take over the government in the spring. Only this party is expected to change the current very bad economic and political situation."<sup>492</sup>

The enormous increase in public meetings - between 1929 and 1932 the number roughly doubled each year - led to a simultaneous growth in violence. Additionally, the brutality of the clashes increased. Seven people were killed in Leipzig alone in 1931.<sup>493</sup> Frequent bans on meetings or parades were not sufficient to prevent this.<sup>494</sup> Many citizens did not understand why the government did not introduce measures to stop the violence.<sup>495</sup> Overall, the judiciary seemed to be lenient towards the Right, and tough against the Left<sup>496</sup>, and the clashes were increasingly provoked by the Nazis.<sup>497</sup> The Nazis, like their opponents, always portrayed the other side (mainly Communists) as brutal attackers. They accused the government in Dresden or the local police of

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid., Januar 1932.

<sup>493</sup> STA L, AH Döbeln, Nr. 2409, Rückblick auf das Jahr 1931.

<sup>494</sup> In mid-1931 the Saxon intelligence service reported about bans in the AH Leipzig, the town of Leipzig, Zittau, Mittweida, Leisnig, Crimmitschau, and Radebeul. The Saxon government declared a ban on all propaganda trips between 20.7.-15.9.1931 (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, Juni 1931).

<sup>495</sup> The AH Schwarzenberg reported in early 1931: "The attacks and bloody clashes between KPD and NSDAP ... are sharply condemned by all peace loving citizens. Most citizens do not understand that the government does not introduce measures to stop the attacks" (ibid., AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1944, März 1931).

<sup>496</sup> E.g. a court acquitted the Nazi Spengler, who shot dead two Communists in Plauen on 29.11.1930, from manslaughter. The court regarded it as an act of self-defence, and sentenced him to three months prison because of illegal possession of a weapon. The verdict caused irritation even in bourgeois circles (ibid., MdI, Nr. 11126/4, Februar 1931).

<sup>497</sup> Between 1.8.-20.11.1932 of 351 clashes and insults 128 were provoked by the NSDAP, eighty-one by the KPD, and twenty-seven by the Eiserner Front in Leipzig (the remaining 115 were unpolitical or the attacker was not clear) (STA L, PP-St, Nr. 92).

tolerating the violence inflicted on them by the Marxists, while preventing the Nazis from defending themselves.<sup>498</sup>

During the years of crisis the divisions within Saxon society increased further. Some radical Social Democrats split away from the SPD to form the SAP in October 1931<sup>499</sup>, which was strong in the KH Zwickau. Five of twelve SPD members of the town council in Plauen joined the SAP.<sup>500</sup> Moreover, the gulf between the local SPD and KPD widened more and more. At the same time the traditional right disintegrated even further. A DVP member of the town council in Chemnitz joined the NSDAP in late 1931.<sup>501</sup>

The Right failed in its attempt to imitate the dynamic and determined NSDAP. The DNVP founded a *Schutzstaffel* in late 1930. The organisation was dissolved in March 1931 because of internal disputes and lack of members.<sup>502</sup> Smaller right wing organisations were swallowed by the NSDAP. When the *Reichsflagge*, a paramilitary organisation, was dissolved in Zwickau in March 1931, one-quarter of its members joined the *Stahlhelm*, and the rest the NSDAP.<sup>503</sup>

At the same time Saxon society was increasingly polarized between left and right. When the Social Democrats from Meißen were visited by a group of French sportsmen they hoisted the 'Tricolor' and put up placards in both languages with the slogan: 'Welcome, French Brothers'. The local Nazis were outraged that "the colours of the

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<sup>498</sup> See 'Limbacher Polizeiskandal', *FK*, Nr. 253, 29.10.1931. The 'Isidor Weiß' of Saxony was Fleißner, the head of the Leipzig police and SPD member.

<sup>499</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, September 1931.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, Oktober 1931.

<sup>501</sup> *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, Nr. 279, 9.10.1931. Furthermore, parliamentary members of the WP and SLV joined the DNVP in the state parliament in early 1932 (*Der Tag*, Nr. 32, 6.2.1932).

<sup>502</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, November 1931.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, März 1931.

french *Erbfeind* waved above a town in Saxony."<sup>504</sup> They became even more furious when their own swastika flag, which they had raised at the town hall of Mar'neukirchen to welcome an SA parade, was removed.<sup>505</sup> Furthermore, during the campaign for the elections to the 'parents councils' in May 1931, the Right put forward the choice between Christianity or barbarity in Saxon schools. The Nazis underlined their support of Christianity, faith, family values and nationalism, and warned about the evil effects of the spread of unchristian Bolshevism from the Soviet Union, which they described as the "sinister moloch and patronizer of ungodliness."<sup>506</sup>

The divisions were also reflected in electing the president of the state parliament. In July 1930 all bourgeois parties followed the tradition that the largest faction in parliament provided the president, and indirectly supported the Social Democrat Weckel as candidate by handing in blank ballot papers. The Democrats voted for Weckel. Only the NSDAP and KPD put forward their own candidates.<sup>507</sup> The situation changed only four months later. In November 1930 the Social Democrat Weckel just managed to be elected with thirty-five votes compared with thirty-four for Kunz, the candidate of the NSDAP.<sup>508</sup> Again the KPD put forward its own candidate and the Democrats supported Weckel, however, this time the bourgeois vote was split. Some still stuck to tradition and

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<sup>504</sup> FK, Nr. 105, 7.5.1931.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> See 'Für ein positives Christentum', *ibid.*, Nr. 109, 12.5.1931. The NSDAP advised all parents to vote for the christian lists (*ibid.*, Nr. 112, 16.5.1931). The elections brought an increase for the christian lists (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, Mai 1931).

<sup>507</sup> *VdSL*, 5. Wp, 1. Sitzung, 10.7.1930.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. Sitzung, 13.11.1930.

handed in blank ballot papers (fourteen), but the majority supported the Nazi Kunz (twenty). The NSDAP's campaign to bring down Weckel just failed.<sup>509</sup>

However, the clear failure of the NSDAP-KPD referendum to dissolve the state parliament in spring 1932 showed that it was still only a minority who wanted the complete destruction of the parliamentary system. Even in south-western Saxony, where the economic situation was particularly desperate and the NSDAP had one of its greatest national bastions, the radical parties were not able to mobilize a majority of the population to topple the system.<sup>510</sup>

**(iii) The NSDAP in Saxony: years of continued and accelerated growth**

1931 was the year in which the local NSDAP grew most rapidly and consolidated its organisation. 1932 was the year of continued growth, six elections<sup>511</sup>, and permanent propaganda. *Gauleiter* Mutschmann announced before the elections for the president of the *Reich* in early 1932: "Each party member needs to focus on one thing day and night: I have not got time for anything, even the family has to take a back seat, my bowling club, other clubs or meetings, everything, and really everything has to give way; henceforth I only know the complete devotion to my

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<sup>509</sup> E.g. see the article 'Weckel must resign! Never again Weckel as president of the state parliament' (*FK*, Nr. 205, 3.9.1931). See the chapter about the 'Nationalist Milieu'.

<sup>510</sup> For some results see *FK*, Nr. 292, 16.12.1931.

<sup>511</sup> 13 March: first election for the president of the *Reich*, 10 April: second election for the president of the *Reich*, 17 April: referendum to dissolve the state parliament, 31 July: *Reichstag* elections, 6 November: *Reichstag* elections, 13 November: local elections.

movement!"<sup>512</sup> The NSDAP became by far the largest party in Saxony in the elections in 1932 (see Table 8). This was even true for the KH Bautzen in the east, where the NSDAP won 39 per cent of the vote in the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections.

Table 8: NSDAP election results in Saxony between 1932 and 1933

electoral districts	RPW Hitler	RW 1932I	RW 1932II	RW 1933
Leipzig	34.2	36.1	31.0	40.0
Dresden	36.7	39.3	34.0	43.6
Chemnitz	47.2	47.0 (7.)	43.4 (2.)	50.0 (8.)
Saxony	39.8	41.3	36.6	45.0
<i>Reich</i>	36.8	37.3	33.1	43.9

RPW: second vote in the elections to the president of the *Reich* on 10.4.1932  
Source: *StJbSa*, (1924-1934).

The growth of the local party was best seen in the rising membership figures and the expansion of the party apparatus. The membership of the NSDAP in Saxon grew from 8,557 to 87,079, and the number of party branches and bastions increased from 132 to 783 between 1930 and late 1932/early 1933. To pick some local examples: The membership of the NSDAP in the district of Dresden increased from 800 in early 1930 to 6,000 in October 1931, and 12,000 a year later.<sup>513</sup> In 1931 the NSDAP in Limbach increased from 179 to 656 members<sup>514</sup>, and from 136 to 370 members in Radebeul.<sup>515</sup> Big towns like Dresden had thirty-two sections in August 1931.<sup>516</sup> A dense party network was created particularly in the south-west of the state. In the district of 'Upper Erzgebirge' (AH

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<sup>512</sup> See 'Imposante Gautagung in Chemnitz', *ibid.*, Nr. 38, 15.2.1932.

<sup>513</sup> *Das nationalsozialistische Sachsen*, p. 55.

<sup>514</sup> *FK*, Nr. 23, 28.1.1932.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 32, 8.2.1932.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 180, 5.8.1931.

Annaberg, AH Marienberg, and part of AH Freiberg) the NSDAP boasted seventy party branches at the end of 1931.<sup>517</sup> This meant that there was an NSDAP party branch in two of every three villages, and that the NSDAP had at least as many party branches as the SPD, who traditionally used to have by far the most widespread party network.<sup>518</sup> There was also a massive increase of visitors to NSDAP meetings. In autumn 1931 prominent party leaders like Goebbels and Strasser were regularly able to attract an audience of 5,000-15,000 people, and meetings by other prominent Nazis still pulled crowds of between 1,600 and 3,000.<sup>519</sup>

Another sign of the growth of the Nazi movement was the simultaneous creation of new ancillary organisations and the rapid growth of established ones. There was a 'National Socialist Automobile Corps'<sup>520</sup>, a Nazi teacher organisation<sup>521</sup>, an NSDAP service for imprisoned and injured party members<sup>522</sup>, groups for children and pupils<sup>523</sup>, an organisation for Nazi doctors<sup>524</sup>, Nazi

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<sup>517</sup> Ibid., Nr. 259, 6.11.1931.

<sup>518</sup> The SPD districts of Annaberg, Olbernhau, and Flöha, which covered roughly the same area, had eighty-four party branches in 1929 (*Jahresbericht der SPD Chemnitz-Erzgebirge* 1929, p. 9). The number of its party branches and members fell dramatically afterwards (see the chapter 'Working-Class Milieu')

<sup>519</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, September 1931.

<sup>520</sup> The NSAK was set up in summer 1930 and was divided into five districts by the end of the year. In Chemnitz there was a motor vehicle unit with at least one-hundred vehicles and a motorcycle unit with at least ninety motor-bicycles in early 1932 (ibid., Nr. 19085, NSDAP 1930).

<sup>521</sup> The NSLO held its first meeting in Saxony in 1931. At the time they were particularly strong in Franconia, Thuringia and Saxony. There were branches in Dresden, Leipzig, Chemnitz, Zwickau, Plauen, Zittau-Bautzen, Aue-Schwarzenberg (ibid., Nr. 19086, NSDAP 1929-32).

<sup>522</sup> Ibid., Nr. 11126/4, Mai 1931.

<sup>523</sup> There were NSDAP children groups in Leipzig, Dresden, Chemnitz and Plauen in August 1931 (ibid., Juli 1931). There were NSDAP pupils groups in Leipzig, Wurzen, Oschatz, Borna, Rochlitz and Grimma in the KH Leipzig (ibid., November 1931).

<sup>524</sup> It was founded in Chemnitz on 15.2.1931 (FK, Nr. 37, 13.2.1931).

musicians<sup>525</sup>, an NSDAP flying association<sup>526</sup>, and the NSF increased its membership and became centralized<sup>527</sup>. By 1932 the party and most of its affiliated organisation were well organised. Helmut Körner, the leader of the NSDAP's agricultural organisation in Saxony, reported to Darré about progress in 1932: "The whole apparatus is strongly centralized, and I am confident in saying that nothing happens in the field of agriculture in Saxony about which I am not immediately informed. The opposition is therefore completely surveyed ... It is possible for me to spread specific information to the whole agricultural sector in Saxony ... The good relations I have built up enable me to have a good insight in every agricultural organisation in Saxony, even up to the agricultural section in the Ministry of the Economy."<sup>528</sup>

The Saxon SA grew to 19041 men in October 1931, which was roughly ten per cent of the SA in the *Reich*.<sup>529</sup> The local SA put an emphasis on discipline and duty<sup>530</sup>, and tried to present the image of the protector of property. During the SA ban in spring 1932 the Saxon Storm-troopers went under cover in a so called 'emergency security section' (*Notschutz*) to protect property in case of

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid., Nr. 54, 5.3.1931.

<sup>526</sup> The 'National Sozialistische Flugsportverband Westsachsen' was founded in March 1932. The first Nazi air show took place in Plauen on 26 June 1932 (see 'Die NSDAP in Sachsen', *Sachsen*, p. 3).

<sup>527</sup> The organisation of the NSF moved from Munich to the Gau headquarters in Plauen (*FK*, Nr. 6, 8.1.1931). The NSF's membership in Saxony increased twentyfold between October 1931 and the end of 1933, to a total of 80,000 (Stephenson, *Nazi Women*, pp. 148-9).

<sup>528</sup> Stadtarchiv Goslar, Nachlaß Darré Nr. 140, Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Landwirtschaftlichen Abteilung der NSDAP im Gau Sachsen, p. 4.

<sup>529</sup> The police reported a rapid growth of the SA in the district of Chemnitz to 1,600 men in early 1932 (*STA D*, Mdl, Nr. 19088, SA 1928-32).

<sup>530</sup> The SA members in Leipzig had eight different events on their schedule in August 1930. Five were regarded as particularly important. A member was automatically excluded if he missed three of the important events. Every Storm-trooper had to pay at least 50 *Pfennig* every week for the acquisition of a helmet and a coat (*ibid.*).

disturbances.<sup>531</sup> The SA made efforts to follow the tradition of the local army. They frequently turned up at meetings and parades of war veterans, and many of the numbers of the local SA units corresponded with the numbers of former local army regiments.<sup>532</sup> They also increased their co-operation with the *Stahlhelm*<sup>533</sup>, and were not affected by the SA rebellion in Berlin in September 1930 or the Stennes rebellion in April 1931.<sup>534</sup> The high percentage of unemployed among Storm-troopers<sup>535</sup> enhanced their mobility and activity.

The local Nazis became more involved in local government and introduced a newsletter about local affairs in Saxony at the end of 1931.<sup>536</sup> The NSDAP tried to woo the church and religious individuals with meetings on topics like 'faith and education'<sup>537</sup>,

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<sup>531</sup> *Vossische Zeitung*, Nr. 188, 19.4.1932.

<sup>532</sup> The SA in Chemnitz was divided into seven *Stürme* (groups of 70-100 men) at the end of 1931, three of which carried the number of the former infantry regiment in Chemnitz (104, 181, 244). At the same time Sturm 134, also the number of a former local infantry regiment, was created in Plauen (STA D, MdI, Nr. 19088, SA 1928-32).

<sup>533</sup> Several members of the *Stahlhelm* participated at an SA meeting in eastern Saxony in mid-1931 (ibid., Nr. 11126/4, Juli 1931).

<sup>534</sup> The Saxon intelligence service reported that the dispute within the SA in Berlin did not affect Saxony in April 1931. Also see Bennecke 'SA Sachsen', p. 45. However, the weekly paper 'Workers, Peasants, Soldiers', published by Stennes, was read by some Storm-troopers in Leipzig (ibid., April 1931).

<sup>535</sup> The NSDAP in Dresden attempted to bring together unemployed party members in their local SA and SS houses (FK, Nr. 52, 3.3.1931). The Nazis claimed that forty-four per cent of all members of the SA in Saxony were unemployed in spring 1931 (*Der Gau Sachsen*, p. XVIII). At the end of 1931 apparently 80 per cent of the SA and SS were unemployed in Plauen (FK, Nr. 251, 27.10.1931).

<sup>536</sup> BA, NS 22, Nr. 1067. Kunz, who was responsible for NSDAP community politics, summarized that the main task of the NSDAP was to gain power, and that they were against new taxes (FK, Nr. 150, 1.7.1931).

<sup>537</sup> The Nazi teacher Göpfert held many meetings with similar topics to middle class audiences (e.g. see ibid., Nr. 65, 18.3.1931). The priest Brussig greeted Nazis on the streets with "Heil Hitler" in eastern Saxony, and proclaimed at a solstice celebration of the NSDAP: "As red as these flames shine, as red may the blood of our enemies flow in due time!" (*Volkszeitung für Löbau*, Nr. 162, 13.7.1932).



and the *FK* introduced a little section on 'church news' in 1932<sup>538</sup>. The *FK* also introduced a special page for farmers in September 1931<sup>539</sup>, and were active among the police. In August 1932 the *Gauleitung* in Plauen reported to the headquarters in Munich that they had "infiltrated the ranks of the police in Saxony comparatively well"<sup>540</sup>.

Most of the NSDAP's affiliated organisations continued to be geared to the middle classes. In early 1931 the NSDAP in Leipzig had special advisers for civil servants, social benefits, economic policy, independent traders and artisans, gymnastics and sport, war invalids, and culture.<sup>541</sup> Additionally, the Nazis made great efforts to infiltrate bourgeois organisations. The NSDAP won twenty of the forty seats in the elections to the agricultural chambers (LK) in May 1931, and the *FK* became one of its official newspapers.<sup>542</sup> The Nazis also claimed to be represented in the home owner association in Chemnitz<sup>543</sup>, and wooed the powerful VSI, the organisation of the Saxon industrialists.<sup>544</sup> Furthermore, the *FK* was portrayed as the only newspaper which supported the middle classes.<sup>545</sup>

A rapprochement between the Nazis and bourgeoisie was frequently made difficult by some radical features of the NSDAP.

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<sup>538</sup> *FK*, Nr. 132, 28.5.1932.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 212, 11.9.1931.

<sup>540</sup> BA, NS 22, Nr. 1067. Already in late 1930 the SPD reported that the 'Sächsischer Polizeibund', who had about 200 members, identified with the NSDAP (*DVZ*, Nr. 263, 11.11.1930).

<sup>541</sup> *FK*, Nr. 79, 4.4.1931.

<sup>542</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, Mai 1931.

<sup>543</sup> *FK*, Nr. 57, 9.3.1931. For the continuous attempt of the NSDAP to infiltrate the DHV see the article 'Die Kritik der Jugend. Stürmische DHV-Versammlung in Leipzig' (*ibid.*, Nr. 260, 7.11.1931).

<sup>544</sup> E.g. see the article about the VSI in *ibid.*, Nr. 147, 27.6.1931.

<sup>545</sup> The Nazis claimed that the *FK* was the only newspaper who was against department stores, consumer cooperatives and against Jews which made it the only paper which supported the middle classes (*ibid.*, Nr. 108, 11.5.1931).

The leader of the home owners' association in Leipzig and member of the local town council, Ackermann, expressed reservations against Article 17 of the NSDAP programme<sup>546</sup> in a meeting with a Nazi representative for industry in June 1930. However, Ackermann was willing to strengthen the links with the party once he was convinced that the Article was not a general statement.<sup>547</sup> The Nazis made efforts to shed some of their radicalism and appeared moderate and rather bourgeois in some respect. Their anti-Semitism became less pronounced. The *FK* abandoned its section 'The State and the Jews' in spring 1931.<sup>548</sup> Furthermore, the *FK* became more engaged in unpolitical issues like regional traditions and *Heimat* and introduced a section 'Across Saxony' ('*Quer durch das Sachsenland*').<sup>549</sup> These features helped to bring about frequent co-operation with bourgeois associations<sup>550</sup>, and a government in Dresden which was lenient towards the NSDAP. Saxony, together with Braunschweig, whose Ministry of the Interior was in Nazi hands, rejected participation in the meeting of the major states (Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden and Hessen) to discuss a ban of National Socialist paramilitary organisations.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Article 17 put forward "a law for the expropriation of land for communal purposes without compensation" (Noakes/Pridham, *Nazism*, pp. 14-16).

<sup>547</sup> BA, NS 18, Nr. 5011.

<sup>548</sup> *FK*, Nr. 90, 18.4.1931. However, see Mutschmann's violently anti-Semitic speech in Zittau in *ibid.*, Nr. 7, 9.1.1933.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 132, 8.6.1932. Additionally, the official Saxon *Gau* history concentrated prominently on the cultural traditions of Saxony (see *Der Gau Sachsen*).

<sup>550</sup> The chamber of handicraft and trade, the association of trade guilds, business association, Association of Businessmen in Vogtland, Associations of German Launderettes, Association of German Flower Shops, Association of Master Baker, Association of Upholsterer, and the Association of Decorators appealed to come to an NSDAP meeting in Plauen on 4.5.1932. Additionally, the council, the inland revenue office, and other organisations sent official delegates to the meeting (*Volkszeitung für Plauen*, Nr. 104, 4.5.1932).

<sup>551</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung Chemnitz*, Nr. 88, 5.4.1932. After the SA was banned in the *Reich* on 13 April 1932, the Saxon government asked Groener if the

The main emphasis of Nazi propaganda was still directed against the alleged corruption of Marxist officials. Fritsch asked NSDAP members to report salaries from mayors, members of local councils and civil servants who came to power in the wake of the revolution after the First World War.<sup>552</sup> They portrayed themselves as honest, decent, and responsible people. After the Nazis' success in the elections for the agricultural chamber in 1931 they decreed that henceforth members of the chamber would only receive travel expenses for third class train tickets, and that their expenses would be cut by fifty per cent. Körner, who had been elected deputy leader of the chamber, even cut his new salary by sixty per cent.<sup>553</sup> The Nazis' self-portrayal of 'renewing' society from its ills was strongly linked with their emphasis on being a youthful movement. The *FK* boasted that 61.3 per cent of the members of the NSDAP in Grimma were younger than thirty years, while the figure for the local SPD for this age group was 19.1 per cent.<sup>554</sup> The NSDAP continued its attempt to attract the working classes.<sup>555</sup> The lecture series by the former KPD member Karl Klötzner, who spoke in well attended meetings about his negative experiences in Soviet Russia<sup>556</sup>, had the dual purpose of winning over workers from the Marxist parties and enhancing the fear of the middle classes about a 'Soviet Saxony'.

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existence of military like organisations would not apply to organisations of other parties too (*LNN*, Nr. 114, 23.4.1932). This obviously reflected the wish to ban the *Reichsbanner* and *Eiserne Front*.

<sup>552</sup> *FK*, Nr. 32, 7.2.1931. In early 1932 the Nazis' main demand in Leipzig for the new year was a clean administration (*ibid.*, Nr. 1, 2.1.1932).

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 242, 16.10.1931.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 81, 8.4.1931.

<sup>555</sup> The NSDAP organised a 'German Celebration of May the First' in Leipzig in 1931 (*STA D*, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, April 1931), or organised an SA meeting in working-class Limbach (*FK*, Nr. 108, 11.5.1931).

<sup>556</sup> *STA D*, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, Juli 1931.

Above all, the Nazis tried to exploit the economic crisis by portraying it as a crisis of the whole system.<sup>557</sup> They copied the slogan 'Saxony needs work' ('*Sachsen braucht Arbeit*') from the VSI<sup>558</sup>, and appealed to the richer sections of the society to take over responsibility for the poor masses during the crisis.<sup>559</sup> The NSDAP in Rochlitz reported that its winter aid programme was targeted at any unemployed, even those linked to opposition parties. The Nazis claimed that the goods they collected enabled them to look after 400 people, that more than one-hundred people received four pounds of bread each week for ten weeks, and that there was a Christmas donation.<sup>560</sup>

The growth of the NSDAP ran parallel to Mutschmann's increasing control of the party in Saxony. The fact that he had financial difficulties and had to give up his business in early 1930s<sup>561</sup>, made him even more determined to have undisputed control in his *Gau*, and to resist vehemently any power-sharing.<sup>562</sup> His powerful position within the national NSDAP became clear when he was

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<sup>557</sup> See the article 'Wie lange noch?', *FK*, Nr. 116, 21.5.1931; and 'Zur Lösung des Arbeitslosenproblems', *ibid.*, Nr. 242, 16.10.1931.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 25, 30.1.1931.

<sup>559</sup> E.g. the Nazis appealed to home owners in Leipzig not to bar rooms for German children and the German future (*ibid.*, Nr. 252, 28.10.1931).

<sup>560</sup> The Nazis collected: "255 *Zentner* potatoes, 32.25 *Zentner* rye, 34.25 *Zentner* wheat, 23.16 *Zentner* fruits, 15.25 *Zentner* carrots, 153 pounds rice and lentils, 500 litre milk, 1/2 *Zentner* quark, 43 pounds meat and sausage, clothes, wood, coal, 500 *Reichsmark* in cash (overall worth 3000 *Reichsmark*)" (*ibid.*, Nr. 32, 8.2.1932).

<sup>561</sup> See *Das nationalsozialistische Sachsen*. Goebbels mentioned Mutschmann's great economic difficulties in April 1930 (Fröhlich, *Tagebücher Goebbels*, 1930 IV 23).

<sup>562</sup> In 1932 Strasser ordered the *Landesinspektoren* Mutschmann and Brückner to divide their *Gaue* in *Untergaue* according to electoral districts and to appoint *Gauleiter* for these. Mutschmann, in contrast to Brückner, probably never carried out the order (U. Kissenkoetter, *Gregor Strasser und die NSDAP* (Stuttgart, 1978), p. 71).

appointed *Landesinspekteur* of Saxony and Thuringia in August 1932.<sup>563</sup>

(iv) Limits of the NSDAP in Saxony

Although the NSDAP made enormous electoral gains in 1930 and became by far the largest party in Saxony two years later, the frustration of the local Nazis grew more and more because they continued to be excluded from power in the state parliament.<sup>564</sup> All attempts at changing this situation were unsuccessful. The NSDAP's motion of 'no-confidence' for the Schieck government in February 1931, its support of the KPD motion to dissolve the parliament in March 1931, and the same motion by the NSDAP in June and October 1932 all failed.<sup>565</sup> The referendum by the radical parties on the left and right seeking to dissolve the state parliament in April 1932 was unsuccessful too.<sup>566</sup>

Additionally, although the Nazi movement made breath-taking advances in many areas, the party continued to be hampered by several limitations. The NSDAP reduced the gap between itself and the SPD in terms of the number of party members and party branches. However, the Nazis still lagged behind the Marxist organisations by the end of 1932, particularly the SPD (see Tables).

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<sup>563</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 19088, SA 1928-32.

<sup>564</sup> E.g. see the article 'Wer regiert in Sachsen', *FK*, Nr. 103, 5.5.1931.

<sup>565</sup> *VdSL*, 5. Wp, 31. Sitzung, 17.2.1931; *ibid.*, 38. Sitzung, 24.3.1931; *ibid.*, 80. Sitzung, 23.6.1932; *ibid.*, 88. Sitzung, 18.10.1932.

<sup>566</sup> The KPD initiated the referendum 'the Saxon parliament is dissolved' between 2.-15. December 1931. The referendum was supported by KPD, SAP, NSDAP, DNVP and SLV. The group managed to get the necessary ten per cent support of the Saxon electorate in order to hold an official referendum (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, November 1931). The percentage of those in favour of the referendum on 17 April 1932 in the electoral districts were: Dresden: 30.4%, Leipzig: 30.0%, Chemnitz: 46.0%, Saxony: 36.0% (*FK*, Nr. 90, 18.4.1932).

This was especially true outside south-western Saxony. In the AH Grimma and AH Oschatz, for example, the NSDAP increased its members from 200 to around 2,000 between the end of 1930 and September 1931.<sup>567</sup> The SPD had at least 4,622 party members in the region at the end of 1930<sup>568</sup>. It is true, however, that the NSDAP was catching up with the SPD with enormous speed and that it possessed a quasi-monopoly of a local party network on the right.

Nevertheless, not everything went as smoothly as the local Nazis liked. The NSDAP's attempts to infiltrate bourgeois professional organisations were often rebuffed. A Nazi speaker was not able to put forward his views during a meeting of the shoemaker guild in Dresden in early 1931.<sup>569</sup> They continued to face limits on infiltrating Marxist strongholds (see the Chapter 'Working-Class Milieu'). Additionally, the NSDAP only started to make progress in eastern Saxony in 1931. The Nazis from Kamenz reported about a "difficult struggle" in their district, the town of Bautzen was only divided into two sections on May 1931, and there were not more than 300 Storm-troopers in eastern Saxony in early 1931.<sup>570</sup> The disparity between the NSDAP's electoral success in the south-west and the rest of Saxony continued in national and local elections until 1933.

Behind the mask of invincibility, some local party branches complained about a lack of new visitors to internal party

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid., Nr. 220, 21.9.1931.

<sup>568</sup> *Jahresbericht des Bezirksvorstandes der SPD Bezirk Leipzig* 1930

<sup>569</sup> FK, Nr. 53, 4.3.1931.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid., Nr. 190, 17.8.1931; *ibid.*, Nr. 110, 13.5.1931; *ibid.*, Nr. 247, 22.10.1931.

meetings<sup>571</sup>; there were internal tensions and disagreements about the direction of the movement<sup>572</sup>; and Mutschmann's arrogant leadership style offended some party members (e.g. Nazi teachers<sup>573</sup>). Some party branches faced financial difficulties. An internal NSDAP auditor described "inadequate spending practices" in the party branch of Dresden; membership dues worth 20,000 *Reichsmark* had not been paid.<sup>574</sup> The NSDAP branch in Hohenstein explained their low figures of only eighteen party members through the inability of the many unemployed in the area to pay for the membership dues.<sup>575</sup>

In some respects the organisation of the NSDAP was unable to cope with the rapid growth of the movement. In early 1931 the Nazis were not able to satisfy the great demand by the local party branches for prominent speakers, and district leaders warned impatient branches to follow the internal command structure regarding propaganda planning.<sup>576</sup> The Nazis from Mühlau, a town with about 3,200 citizens in the AH Rochlitz, reported a whole list of problems they faced: In July 1932 their election meeting was

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<sup>571</sup> The NSDAP leadership in Plauen asked the party members to bring more visitors into the internal meetings (ibid., Nr. 58, 10.3.1931).

<sup>572</sup> The *FK* tried to calm and assure their members because of rumours of a 'Straßer group', a 'Stennes group', and a 'Scheringer group', and pleaded for loyalty: "Enormous sacrifices were made in every respect. We have always stayed loyal to Adolf Hitler, and we will keep this loyalty now in particular. Who ever knows how many more months it will be until we achieve our aim, the power in the state" (ibid., Nr. 195, 22.8.1931). The SPD reported about tensions in Leipzig between Dönicke and the other leaders Haake and Studentkowski. The former acquired a Chrysler from the USA, and created modern offices, while the SA homes were primitive (*LVZ*, Nr. 287, 8.12.1932).

<sup>573</sup> Mutschmann said about the *NSLB* that it was not more than a bunch of idlers, and let the SS throw them out of a meeting in Plauen in 1931. This caused a heavy reaction among Nazi teachers in the Vogtland against Mutschmann (*Volkszeitung für Plauen*, Nr. 173, 28.7.1931; and BA, NS 22, Nr. 1067, Rink an G. Strasser, 21.7.1931).

<sup>574</sup> BDC, Cuno Meyer, OPG.

<sup>575</sup> BA, NS 22, Nr. 1067.

<sup>576</sup> *FK*, Nr. 7, 9.1.1931.

badly attended despite good propaganda. Local builders refused to continue to work when a swastika flag was raised. The creation of a women's group failed because only three women wanted to participate, and the local organisation was undermined because one party member ran away with the money from the branch.<sup>577</sup>

It is also true that the SA, despite its rapid growth, remained a small force compared with the *Reichsbanner*, the largest paramilitary organisation at the time. While the Storm-troopers rallied about 4,000 men at the NSDAP *Gau* meeting in May 1931<sup>578</sup>, the *Reichsbanner* were able to mobilize about 10,000 activists at a district meeting of western Saxony in Chemnitz in June that year<sup>579</sup>. Additionally, the growth of the SA was checked by financial difficulties<sup>580</sup>, internal disputes<sup>581</sup>, and by competition from the SPD paramilitary organisations. In early 1932 the SA in Leipzig reported that there were hardly any new members because of the growth of the Social Democratic *Eiserne Front*.<sup>582</sup> Furthermore, Mutschmann was sometimes so uncooperative with the leader of the Saxon SA, Killinger, that Röhm had to ask him for more support.<sup>583</sup> Lastly, the NSDAP's activities also faced some limits from 'above'. The *FK* was banned for four weeks from

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<sup>577</sup> *Geschichte der NSDAP Ortsgruppe Mühlau* (1941).

<sup>578</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, Mai 1931.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, Juni 1931.

<sup>580</sup> A home for the SA was closed in Dresden because no rent had been paid (*ibid.*, Nr. 19088, SA 1928-32).

<sup>581</sup> The SPD reported about a dispute within the SA in Dresden because of the dismissal of a popular local SA leader ('Meuterei in der Dresdner SA', *DVZ*, Nr. 227, 27.9.1932). There was also a the dispute between Killinger and Lasch (BDC, SA, Killinger, Killinger an G. Strasser, 5.10.1931).

<sup>582</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 19088, SA 1928-32.

<sup>583</sup> BDC, Killinger, SA, Röhm an Mutschmann, 7.7.1932.



18.3.1931 onwards, and the SA, SS, and HJ were banned between  
13.4-16.6.1932.<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> *FK*, Nr. 68, 21.3.1933 (or *ibid.*, Nr. 69, 22.3.1933).

## 9. The Seizure of Power by the Nazis (1933)

### (i) Germany

The Nazis did not win power in elections and did not seize power through force, but were brought into office by a deal with the traditional elites. Hitler's appointment as Chancellor on 30 January 1933 was a compromise between the old authoritarian elites who needed the NSDAP as mass base, and Hitler, who was desperate to gain power in the face of the decline of his party. Once in office, Hitler quickly used his power to "strip the Constitution of its guarantees for civil liberties."<sup>585</sup> The *Reichstag* election on 5 March 1933, in which the NSDAP won 43.9 per cent of the vote, were only 'semi-free'. Communists were already persecuted, and the NSDAP had exploited the state machine in the *Reich* and Prussia for their propaganda campaign. Immediately after the elections the local Nazi organisations carried out a violent 'revolution from below' and as Noakes and Pridham argued "interfered in a totally arbitrary manner with the State administration, with the course of justice and with commercial life."<sup>586</sup> Simultaneously at the local level, the Nazis quickly exploited the situation and seized power in the states. After the Enabling Law on 23 March the demise of the political parties followed. It became apparent, however, that Hitler was against a complete overthrow of the old society and believed that a period of stability was essential. In a speech to the *Reich* Governors (*Reichsstatthalter*) on 6 July 1933 "he formally ended

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<sup>585</sup> Noakes/Pridham, *Nazism*, p. 125.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

the revolution which, he insisted, must from now on take the form of evolution."<sup>587</sup>

(ii) The last months of comparative freedom in Saxony: From the crisis of the Nazis to their last powerful campaign

In some respect, the NSDAP's take over of power on the local level started earlier in Saxony than anywhere else. In Saxony - unlike in most other states - municipal elections took place on 13 November 1932 and made the NSDAP a formidable force in local parliaments, particularly in the south-western region.<sup>588</sup> The party won 27.6 per cent of all seats in local councils.<sup>589</sup> It is true that the election result was a further serious blow for the Nazis. The vote for the NSDAP had already dropped from 41.3 per cent to 36.6 per cent between the July and November 1932 *Reichstag* elections in Saxony, thereafter they lost another 9 per cent in the space of one week. This emphasized the dramatic decline of the party, and the continuous failure of the Nazis to convince the electorate about their abilities on the local level.<sup>590</sup> However, the NSDAP gained an absolute majority in 121 of the roughly 1,820 communities in

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<sup>587</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>588</sup> In most states the last local council elections took place in late 1929 (H. Matzerath, *Nationalsozialismus und kommunale Selbstverwaltung* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz, 1979), p. 48).

<sup>589</sup> The percentage of local council members from the NSDAP in all districts were (number of councils with an absolute majority for the NSDAP in brackets): Vogtland: 50.4 per cent (21), Obervogtland: 44.7% (22), Flöha: 41.8% (5), Obererzgebirge: 39% (16), Mittweida: 35.97% (8), Aue: 32.2% (3), Zwickau: 31.97% (7), Freiberg: 31.96% (3), Stollberg: 30.9% (1), Großenhain: 30.8% (19), Chemnitz: 29.69% (0), Kamenz: 27.6% (2), Oschatz: 27.1% (1), Meißen: 26.7% (3), Döbeln: 26.2% (2), Grimma: 25.4% (1), Dresden: 24.4% (-), Dippoldiswalde: 20.6% (1), Glauchau: 20.3% (2), Löbau: 18.9% (-), Zittau: 18.4% (-), Borna: 15.93% (4), Pirna: 13.78% (-), Leipzig: 12.4% (-), Bautzen: 12.2% (-) (FK, Nr. 22, 26.1.1933).

<sup>590</sup> The NSDAP gained five per cent of the votes in the state election in May 1929, but only 4.3 per cent of the seats in the municipal elections at the end of 1929 (*StJbSa*, (1930)).

which voting took place and became strongest party in most local councils in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland.<sup>591</sup> In south-western Saxony the Nazis managed to make great inroads into the traditional SPD electorate.<sup>592</sup> The advance of the NSDAP on the local level enhanced the division between Left and Right in Saxony, particularly when the local councils elected their presidents. Alliances between the bourgeois parties and the NSDAP secured their candidates the leading positions in many places<sup>593</sup>, and in some councils the SPD and KPD formed a long-awaited 'united front' to establish a Marxist council leadership.<sup>594</sup> The SPD reported that the KPD voted for Social Democratic chairmen in the runoffs, but stuck to its own candidates for deputy mayors.<sup>595</sup> Selbmann, a Communist member of the *Reichstag*, spoke at an SPD meeting in Leipzig on 20 January 1933<sup>596</sup>, to which the Communists had been invited by the SPD. Since 1923 the confrontation between Marxist parties on the one side and bourgeois parties and NSDAP on the other side had never been more pronounced.

The Nazis' influence in the state apparatus in Saxony remained very limited until March 1933. While Marxist supporters had already been purged in the Prussian administration well before

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<sup>591</sup> Election took place in 1,820 communities in November 1929 (*ibid.*).

<sup>592</sup> E.g. the SPD in the AH Stollberg reported "considerable losses" to KPD and NSDAP (*Sozialdemokratisches Gemeindeblatt. Mitteilungen für die Gemeindevertreter des Bezirkes Chemnitz-Erzgebirge*, 8 (1), 1.1.1933, pp. 15-16).

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 (3), 1.2.1933, pp. 54-56.

<sup>594</sup> E.g. in Leipzig (*LVZ*, Nr. 3, 5.1.1933). The SPD and KPD did not co-operate in Dresden, which enabled the bourgeois parties and the NSDAP to vote their candidates as council leaders (*DVZ*, Nr. 14, 17.1.1933).

<sup>595</sup> *SPD Gemeindevertreter Chemnitz-Erzgebirge*, 8 (3), 1.2.1933, p. 53.

<sup>596</sup> STA L, PP-St, Nr. 19, Versammlung der SPD am 20.1.1933.

March 1933<sup>597</sup>, a large part of the Saxon administration were still SPD supporters.

From autumn 1932 until January 1933, the local NSDAP was shaken by the general decline of the movement, internal problems and disputes. In early 1933 the *Gauleitung* in Plauen asked the party headquarters for advice about the dispute between newly created NSBO orchestras and the established SA orchestras. Important financial gains were at stake.<sup>598</sup> At the same time the SPD reported about a crisis in the SA in Leipzig.<sup>599</sup> And finally, the murder of the Storm-trooper Hentsch in Dresden by his own comrades at the end of 1932, caused serious embarrassment for the NSDAP leadership during a very critical phase for the party.<sup>600</sup> At the same time the Marxist parties seemed more hopeful. They entered 1933 in new heart. But tensions still ran high in early 1933. Nine workers were killed and eleven seriously injured by the police at a KPD meeting in Dresden on 25 January 1933.<sup>601</sup>

The lethargic outlook of the local Nazis suddenly changed when Hitler was appointed Chancellor on 30 January, and two days later new elections were announced for 5 March.<sup>602</sup> The Nazis used the momentum created by Hitler's appointment to mobilize all energies

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<sup>597</sup> This process started with the 'Papen coup' in August 1932 and accelerated when Göring became the Prussian Minister of the Interior in early 1933.

<sup>598</sup> BA, NS 22, Nr. 271. At the same time Mutschmann suspended Arno Schreiber, NSDAP member of the state parliament, from most of his posts because of a lack of radicalism (*Berliner Tageblatt*, Nr. 71, 11.2.1933).

<sup>599</sup> LVZ, Nr. 22, 25.1.1933. The SPD also reported the creation of a new right wing paramilitary organisation in Saxony, which also included former Freikorps members (*ibid.*, Nr. 20, 23.1.1933).

<sup>600</sup> While Goebbels stayed with Hitler in Berchtesgaden he wrote in his diary in late December 1932: "We are very worried about the 'Fememord' in Dresden. A disgraceful smear campaign. Our papers are not up to it" (Fröhlich, *Tagebücher Goebbels*, 1932 XII 31).

<sup>601</sup> DVZ, Nr. 22, 26.1.1933.

<sup>602</sup> FK, Nr. 28, 2.2.1933.

for the election campaign, and the NSDAP's membership figures tripled in many places between 30.1.-1.5.1933.<sup>603</sup> At the same time the Marxist parties were pushed onto the defensive. Although they continued to stage impressive rallies<sup>604</sup>, they now appeared cautious and resigned. At a large SPD meeting at the end of February the comparatively radical party leader of Leipzig, Liebmann, asked the party members to behave in a disciplined way to prevent the police dissolving the rally.<sup>605</sup>

The NSDAP's powerful position in the *Reich* made the Saxon government increasingly comply with Nazi wishes. The Saxon Minister of the Interior, Richter, banned all public fund raising campaigns by the Communists on 27 February.<sup>606</sup> The Decree of the *Reich* President for the Protection of People and State, of 28 February, provided the background for Richter to instruct all districts on 1 March to carry out house searches of all known KPD officials, and to take them into custody if suspicious material was found.<sup>607</sup> At the same time all meetings and publications of the KPD were banned, and a wave of arrests of Communists started.<sup>608</sup> The government also banned all SPD newspapers several days before the elections.<sup>609</sup> They were not to go into print again.

The NSDAP's electorate rose to 45 per cent of the votes in the March elections. However, this was only an increase of 8.4 per cent

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<sup>603</sup> In Markranstädt the membership rose from 75 to 500, in Lindentahl from 65 to 280, and Zwenkau from 55 to 400 (BA, NS 22, Nr. 271).

<sup>604</sup> The largest rally took place in Leipzig in mid-February when around 25,000 Social Democrats, including some Communists, demonstrated for freedom (LVZ, Nr. 37, 13.2.1933).

<sup>605</sup> STA L, PP-St, Nr. 19, SPD Wahlversammlung, 24.2.1933.

<sup>606</sup> Bramke, 'Freistaat', p. 1068.

<sup>607</sup> Autorenkollektiv, *KPD Westsachsen*, p. 368.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

<sup>609</sup> The SVB was banned from 1. March, the DVZ and the ChVSt were banned from 3 March onwards.

for the NSDAP vote in Saxony compared with a national increase of 10.8 per cent (see Table 9). The reason for this was that the local Marxist parties defended their position exceptionally well considering the circumstances. Saxony, as in the November election, became the greatest bastion of the Marxist parties before the Nazis destroyed what was still left of democratic institutions and organisations. The elections showed the great polarization in the state. The electoral districts of Leipzig and Dresden-Bautzen were

**Table 9:** *Reichstag* elections results of NSDAP, SPD and KPD in Saxony on 5 March 1933 (percentage of 6 November 1932 in brackets)

electoral districts	NSDAP	SPD	KPD
Leipzig	40.0 (31.0)	30.1 (32.2)	17.4 (20.7)
Dresden	43.6 (34.0)	28.4 (29.5)	13.4 (17.0)
Chemnitz	50.0 (43.4)	21.3 (22.3)	19.0 (21.4)
Saxony	45.0 (36.6)	26.2 (27.6)	16.5 (19.6)
<i>Reich</i>	43.9 (33.1)	18.3 (20.4)	12.3 (16.9)

Source: *StJbSa*, (1932/1934); Falter, *Wahlen*.

the SPD's two strongest electoral districts in the *Reich*, and the electoral district of Chemnitz-Erzgebirge was the fourth best for the KPD, and eighth best for the NSDAP.

### (iii) The Nazis seize power in Saxony

As in the rest of the *Reich*, the Nazis quickly exploited the momentum created by the election campaign and seized power. They seized the Saxon state machinery from 'above' and curbed all opposition, particularly from the organised working-class. The day after the elections *Der Freiheitskampf* proclaimed: "An end to the

friendly line towards the Marxists in Saxony!"<sup>610</sup> Henceforth, everything went very quickly. Manfred von Killinger was appointed *Reichskommissar* by Frick on 7 March and was instructed to take over control of the state machinery.<sup>611</sup> Schieck and his government were forced to resign and Killinger formed a provisional government on 10 March.<sup>612</sup> All Democratic or Social Democratic paramilitary organisations were banned on 13 March.<sup>613</sup> The move of the NSDAP's headquarters from Plauen to Dresden in that month was symbolic for the *Machtergreifung*.<sup>614</sup> On 4 April Killinger issued a decree for the new formation of the state parliament, which stated that parties were able to send delegates according to their result in the *Reichstag* election in March.<sup>615</sup> This enabled the NSDAP to win an absolute majority in the parliament because the KPD and SAP were already banned.<sup>616</sup> In April the local councils and district councils (*Bezirkstage*) were formed according to the same principle.<sup>617</sup> At the same time parliamentary work was made very difficult or impossible for the Social Democrats. Leaders of the SPD and trade unions were arrested, and some sent to concentration camps. Several leaders of the SPD in Leipzig, among them Paul Liebmann, were arrested in a pub in Leipzig on 21.4.1933 and ended up in concentration camps<sup>618</sup>, and

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<sup>610</sup> FK, Nr. 55, 6.3.1933.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid., Nr. 58, 9.3.1933.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., Nr. 60, 11/12.3.1933.

<sup>613</sup> *Sächsisches Verwaltungsblatt*, Nr. 21, 13.3.1933.

<sup>614</sup> LNN, Nr. 74, 15.3.1933. Bennecke argues that the late move of the NSDAP headquarters to Dresden suggests that the local Nazis were not prepared for the *Machtergreifung* (Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 89).

<sup>615</sup> Bramke, 'Freistaat', p. 1070.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid.

<sup>618</sup> STA L, PP-St, Nr. 19, April 1933. Liebmann died in Leipzig shortly after his release in September 1935. 1200 people, mainly older citizens, attended the funeral (ibid., Juli 1935).



twenty-five trade union leaders were arrested in Leipzig on 2 May 1933.<sup>619</sup> The SPD was officially banned in Saxony, as in the *Reich*, on 23 June 1933.<sup>620</sup> On 5 May Mutschmann was appointed *Reich* Governor of Saxony and the new cabinet under Killinger was named.<sup>621</sup> When the SA paraded in front of Hitler at the *Gau* meeting in Leipzig on 15/16 July 1933 the Nazis' seizure of power was long completed.<sup>622</sup>

Immediately after the *Reichstag* elections in early March the SA and SS seized power at the local level. They occupied and searched buildings of the Marxist parties, occupied town halls and hoisted the swastika flag, and started a wave of arrests.<sup>623</sup> Much of this was done spontaneously and with violence. For example an SA leader in Chemnitz shot dead a Jewish lawyer and drowned three young former Communists in a pond.<sup>624</sup> The Jews were a particular target for the SA. In Chemnitz the SA forced all Jews who were in custody to clean the walls and buildings in the town of Marxist slogans<sup>625</sup>, and the *FK* announced a ban on kosher butchering in the state.<sup>626</sup>

In early May 1933 Mutschmann made it clear in his speech before the state parliament that he regarded himself as the head of the state in Saxony.<sup>627</sup> Killinger's government statement was a mixture

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<sup>619</sup> Ibid., PP, V3104.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., PP-St, Nr. 19.

<sup>621</sup> Killinger was president, Dr. Fritsch was Minister of the Interior, Dr. Thierack was Minister of Justice, Professor Gerullis was Minister of Culture, Lenk was Minister of the Economy, Dr. Karmps was Minister of Finance, and Dr. Schmidt was Minister of Labour (*FK*, Nr. 105, 6/7.5.1933).

<sup>622</sup> See 'Die NSDAP in Sachsen', *Sachsen*, p. 3.

<sup>623</sup> *FK*, Nr. 58, 9.3.1933

<sup>624</sup> BDC, Mutschmann, OPG, Wettengel an Oberstes Parteigericht, 4.12.1936.

<sup>625</sup> *FK*, Nr. 67, 20.3.1933.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid., Nr. 70, 23.3.1933.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid., Nr. 114, 17.5.1933.

of the regimes' radical nationalist and racist aims, and appeals to all groups in society, particularly to the middle classes.<sup>628</sup> Killinger admitted indirectly the government's limits in solving the economic crisis: "The greatest upswing can only come through private initiative." He also conceded Saxony's great dependence on the *Reich* in financing the social benefits and boosting industrial production through government orders.<sup>629</sup> In a confident report to Darre in early 1933, Körner had already warned him not to raise the material hopes of the farmers too much, but rather to concentrate on the ideological aspect of the National Socialists' 'blood and soil' ideology.<sup>630</sup>

The seizure of power by the Nazis was anything but a smooth process. The Nazis encountered difficulties in hoisting the swastika flag at many town halls, e.g. the mayors of Dresden and Crimmitschau resisted their action.<sup>631</sup> There were massive SPD and KPD demonstrations in Annaberg on 31.1.1933 against the Hitler government, and the continuous activities of left wing groups required the Nazis to organise a second purge after 13 March 1933 in the whole AH Annaberg.<sup>632</sup> There were not any great 'victory' celebrations and demonstrations of the NSDAP in Leipzig in the first half of 1933. The local Nazis obviously did not want to stir the great resentments against them, and observed that "only the *Gau* meeting in July brought the occasion for the long waited first mass parade."<sup>633</sup> In the referendum in November 1933 12.5 per cent of

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

<sup>630</sup> Darré, 'Gau Sachsen', pp. 4-5.

<sup>631</sup> FK, Nr. 58, 9.3.1933; NSDAP Crimmitschau, p. 16.

<sup>632</sup> NSDAP Annaberg, pp. 231-232.

<sup>633</sup> *Das nationalsozialistische Sachsen*, p. 59.

all voters voted against the Nazi state in Leipzig. The local police reported afterwards: "Leipzig is politically the most vulnerable spot in Saxony ... It is likely that there is a need for the greatest employment of political force to control the Communists and to avoid security being endangered in a serious way. The recent arrests of several leading KPD activists made it clear that the KPD has no intention of giving up its activities in opposition to the state."<sup>634</sup> The *Machtergreifung* was often a mixture of extreme brutality and accommodating action. In Mühlau, a small town in the AH Rochlitz, Storm-troopers shot dead two Communists who tried to escape imprisonment.<sup>635</sup> However, the former mayor remained in his position. The local population remained divided in their attitude towards the Nazi regime. There were only seventy-seven party members in the town in May 1933 (3.3 per cent of the electorate), and 17 per cent of the electorate (404 votes) voted against the *Führer* in the national referendum in August 1934.<sup>636</sup> It is also true that the enormous growth in membership brought additional problems for the NSDAP. In July 1933 the district of Leipzig complained to Mutschmann that it was increasingly difficult to find suitable party officials.<sup>637</sup> Additionally, the Communists reported growing disillusionment even among Nazi voters at the end of 1933 (see Appendix 5).

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<sup>634</sup> STA L, PP-V, 4943.

<sup>635</sup> NSDAP Mühlau.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

<sup>637</sup> BA, NS 22, Nr. 271.

(iv) A revolution?

It is true that the SA and SS committed many atrocities in the course of the *Machtergreifung*. However, Killinger attempted to follow Hitler's orders: "Make sure that the revolution does not get out of hand, and that everything goes along orderly lines."<sup>638</sup> On 7 March, the same day Hitler had given him these instructions, Killinger personally prevented the shooting of a Jewish reporter by the SS inside the state parliament.<sup>639</sup> On 9 and 10 March 1933 Killinger sanctioned the violence already meted out by the SA and SS, but announced an official ban on further spontaneous action of any kind<sup>640</sup> and repeatedly warned that the state would prosecute anyone who committed personal infringements.<sup>641</sup>

The Nazis even felt obliged to justify some of their radical actions. When they arrested 135 'criminals' in the AH Annaberg shortly after the March *Reichstag* elections they explained that the Communists had planned to bomb attack the SA and all important plants and public buildings in the area.<sup>642</sup> In June the *FK* boasted that the new government had secured "new orders from the *Reich* for Saxony".<sup>643</sup> Local NSDAP papers explicitly forbade any activity against department stores.<sup>644</sup> It makes sense that Hitler trusted Killinger, and not the radical and brutal Mutschmann, with the 'delicate' task of seizing power without alienating the traditional ruling elites and the rest of society too much. Killinger had good

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<sup>638</sup> BDC, Killinger, OPG, Killinger an Oberstes Parteigericht, December 1936/January 1937, p. 3.

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>640</sup> Bramke, 'Freistaat', p. 1069.

<sup>641</sup> E.g. see Killinger's government statement in *FK*, Nr. 114, 17.5.1933.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 65, 17.3.1933.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 134, 12.6.1933.

<sup>644</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung Chemnitz*, Nr. 158, 9.7.1933.

links with nationalist circles in Saxon society, and as one of the highest ranking SA leaders, he had the authority to control the revolutionary aspirations of the Sturm-troopers.

The 'moderate' approach annoyed Mutschmann and other Nazis who were more radical in their aspirations. Studentkowski complained that Killinger appointed mainly people from 'society' (he mentioned the '*Nationaler Klub*') and who were completely unknown to the old core of the local Nazi movement. He elaborated: "From the beginning the whole line of Killinger's politics remained unchanged. He made efforts, and even declared it repeatedly as his programme, that the revolution should be carried through in legal ways and with the preservation of peace, order and justice ... a complete emphasis in favour of the national society."<sup>645</sup> Mutschmann too mentioned Killinger's links to the '*Nationaler Klub*' and the so called 'better society'. He stated: "Although he was really fuming during the time of struggle, I realised very quickly that he had not given up his bourgeois manners ... When I demanded a tough and necessary measure it was either not carried out at all or only partially."<sup>646</sup> Mutschmann also claimed that Killinger's hesitant behaviour at the beginning forced him to intervene, and personally bring down the old government under Schieck.<sup>647</sup> The personal and ideological frictions between *Reichsstatthalter* Mutschmann and president Killinger continued even after Mutschmann took over the leadership of the Saxon government in early 1935.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> BDC, Killinger, Studentkowski an Wettengel, 27.11.1936.

<sup>646</sup> BDC, Mutschmann, Mutschmann an Oberstes Parteigericht, 4.12.1936.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid.

<sup>648</sup> Mutschmann was ordered to lead the Saxon government on 28.2.1935 (E. Stockhorst, *5000 Köpfe. Wer war was im Dritten Reich* (Bruchsal, 1967)). Bramke's assessment that Mutschmann's appointment as *Reichsstatthalter*

Mutschmann and other radicals would have liked a more thorough revolution, nevertheless there were obviously drastic changes in Saxony's society. The persecution of working-class activists was particularly ruthless in Saxony. Killinger reported 10,000 arrests by July 1933 and more than one-sixth of all concentration camps in the *Reich* were on Saxon soil in 1933.<sup>649</sup> Exceptionally brutal atrocities were reported from the concentration camp in Hohenstein.<sup>650</sup> Civil servants who were 'non-aryan', former members of the KPD, SAP, or SPD, or were in opposition to the Nazis, were dismissed.<sup>651</sup> Mutschmann boasted on 1 August that he had dismissed 2,000 people from the state service.<sup>652</sup> The Communists reported the situation in Leipzig in November 1933: "The Nazis have not only dismissed the last Communists, but also all SPD workers from the companies. The Nazis built their nest in the former strongholds of the SPD in the municipal companies of gas, water, electricity, tram, slaughterhouse, etc" (see Appendix 5). However, reports from smaller towns give the impression of continuity rather than change after March 1933. Several leaders of the local bourgeoisie, with no long party affiliation or beliefs in National Socialist ideals, headed the new NSDAP leadership in Raschau/ Erzgebirge. The former branch leader and his wife, both

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prevented the normal frictions between the *Gau* and the state organisation is wrong (Bramke, 'Freistaat', p. 1071). For the numerous disputes between Mutschmann and Killinger see the personal files in the BDC.

<sup>649</sup> The largest ones were Colditz, Dresden, Hainichen, Königstein, castle Osterstein, Sachsenburg, and Hohenstein (Mai, 'Mutschmann', p. 130).

<sup>650</sup> After the guards of the concentration camp in Hohenstein were tried because of the brutal atrocities they committed on inmates, Mutschmann asked Hitler to pardon the SA members because of 'humanitarian reasons' (BDC, Mutschmann, OPG, Wettengel an Oberstes Parteigericht, 4.12.1936, p. 12).

<sup>651</sup> E.g. the secretary of the Association of Saxon policemen was dismissed (*Leipziger Tageszeitung*, 13.3.1933).

<sup>652</sup> Mai 'Mutschmann', p. 114.

loyal Nazis who did not want to co-operate with these circles, were thrown out of the party.<sup>653</sup> A local KPD activist continued his job as local teacher after a short imprisonment.<sup>654</sup>

The extent of the new measures are difficult to assess. However, the few figures available do not suggest a great 'upheaval'. Matzerath wrote that nine of twenty mayors left their posts in Saxon towns with more than 20,000 citizens between the end of 1932 and the end of 1933.<sup>655</sup> About 1,600 of an overall total of 15,800 town employees in Leipzig were dismissed between January and September 1933 because of their party affiliation with the KPD<sup>656</sup>, and 250 people of a total of 18,700 employed in the judiciary were dismissed<sup>657</sup>.

The lack of serious resistance to the NSDAP's *Machtergreifung* remains one of the most crucial questions. The bourgeoisie was either already infiltrated by the Nazis or conformed quickly<sup>658</sup>, or was indulged in self-delusion because the violence, suppression and persecution initially concentrated on the Left, or they simply feared for their life or position.

The lack of resistance amongst the organised working class is more difficult to explain. Hardly any one took it seriously when the prominent guest speaker Grzesinski ended an SPD party rally in Leipzig at the end of February 1933 with the slogan: "We want to

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<sup>653</sup> BDC, OPG, Pillmayer, 'Geschichte der Ortsgruppe der NSDAP zu Raschau', pp. 8-9.

<sup>654</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>655</sup> Matzerath, *Selbstverwaltung*, p. 80.

<sup>656</sup> Bramke, 'Freistaat', p. 1071.

<sup>657</sup> M. Habicht, 'Verfolgung und Widerstand nichtproletarischer Kräfte im Raum Leipzig-West Sachsen 1933-1945' (PhD Leipzig, 1990), p. 52.

<sup>658</sup> The Nazis reported that most members of the master bakers guild in Dresden supported Hitler in mid-March 1933 (FK, Nr. 66, 18.3.1933).

be free as our fathers were. Rather dead, than a slave!"<sup>659</sup> Overall, the great majority of leading SPD and trade union officials were against violence even in the face of their own extinction. Approximately 2,000 members of the *Kampfstaffeln* in Leipzig, an SPD paramilitary organisation which had been set up to combat the Nazis' with violent means, waited in vain for a signal to strike between 5.-8. March 1933.<sup>660</sup> The report of a Nazi informant in mid-April 1933 summarized the indecisiveness and self-delusion of the organised working-class: "SPD members and members of the working-class sport organisations propose again and again that they will behave quietly during the next half a year in order to see how they can win over those with resentments once again."<sup>661</sup>

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<sup>659</sup> STA L, PP-St, Nr. 19, Wahlversammlung der SPD, 24.2.1933.

<sup>660</sup> PDS Archiv Leipzig, Nr. 15/329, 'Die Kampfstaffeln'.

<sup>661</sup> STA L, PP-St, Nr. 19, April 1933.



## **Part II: Themes:**

**Social Conflict, Polarization, Economic Crisis, Propaganda  
and the Rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony**

## 10. The Rise of the Nazis in the Working-Class Milieu of Saxony

### (i) Introduction

Specific features favoured the rise of widespread support for the SPD and the development of a whole network of socialist organisations in Saxony from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Saxony was one of the earliest regions to industrialize in continental Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and quickly developed into the centre of the organised working-class movement in Germany. Due to the early industrialisation a large percentage of the population were wage earners and employed in industry. This was also the case in rural areas, where the typical village with a peasant population ceased to exist. Instead, there were 'industrial villages' with people employed in small- or medium scale industries and cottage industries, some of them pursuing only part-time work in agriculture. Due to a high population density, Saxony had an urban outlook with large urban centres and many villages bordering each other. Other factors favouring the development of a dense working-class organisational network were a good network of communications, and Protestantism as the dominant religion. The 'democratic-revolutionary' tradition of the region and the national prominence of its first leaders, August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, also helps explain why Saxony became one of the earliest strongholds of the SPD.<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>662</sup> H. Zwahr, 'Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung im Länder- und Territorienvergleich 1875', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 13 (4) (1987), pp. 448-507; G. A. Ritter, 'Das Wahlrecht und die Wählerschaft der Sozialdemokratie im Königreich Sachsen 1867-1914', in G. A. Ritter (Hrsg.), *Der Aufstieg der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (München, 1990), pp. 49-102.

Until recently, scholars commonly accepted the traditional view presented by Geiger and Lipset, that the Nazi movement was a 'middle class' phenomenon whose typical supporter was protestant, belonged to the independent middle class, and lived in a rural area.<sup>663</sup> This interpretation has changed in the last decade as a result of sophisticated computer-based analyses about Nazi voters and members.<sup>664</sup> Today most historians agree that the Nazi movement had a much more complex social composition than once assumed. It seems widely accepted that the NSDAP, although middle class groups played the most prominent role, was a true *Volkspartei* (people's party) which attracted voters and members from all groups in society.

An insufficiently researched and still disputed field remains the extent to which the Nazis were able to attract working-class support and what the exact relationship was between both players. This chapter attempts to give new answers by looking at the rise of the Nazi Party in the predominantly working-class area of Saxony.<sup>665</sup> The focus will be mainly on the role of the SPD and its constituency during the rise of the NSDAP in the region. Saxony was not only one of the greatest strongholds of the SPD, but the Social Democrats were also by far the biggest party in the Saxon parliament and more active than any other party in the defence of the Republic.

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<sup>663</sup> See T. Geiger, 'Panik im Mittelstand', *Die Arbeit*, (7) (1930), pp. 637-654; S. M. Lipset, 'Fascism of the Left, Right, and Center', in S. M. Lipset, *Political Man, The Social Bases of Politics* (New York, 1960).

<sup>664</sup> See especially the numerous articles by J. W. Falter, and recently his *Hitlers Wähler* (München, 1991); but also T. Childers, *The Nazi Voter. The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill, NC, London, 1983); D. Mühlberger, *Hitler's Followers. Studies in the Sociology of the Nazi Movement* (London, 1991).

<sup>665</sup> Some of the views expressed in this chapter are similar to those in F. Walter's excellent article 'Stammland'.

## (ii) Divisions in Saxon Society

A traditionally strong, socialist working-class movement was facing an extremely conservative class of employers, civil servants, shopkeepers and other middle class professionals, landowners and, up to the revolution in 1918, a powerful aristocracy. In contrast to the south German states, where the Social Democrats had the possibility of finding alliances in parliament or during election campaigns, the SPD was completely isolated in the party system of Saxony before the First World War. All other parties, despite their great differences in interest and ideology, combined in their efforts to prevent an SPD majority in parliament. In the decades before the First World War they joined forces twice to completely change the electoral system (1896 and 1909) in order to prevent a strong socialist influence or even majority in parliament.<sup>666</sup> This possibility seemed real as the Saxon Social Democrats were able to win the highest percentage of votes of any German province in every election to the German parliament between 1874 and 1912. They also gained their greatest ever election victory with 58.8 per cent of the vote and twenty-two of the twenty-three mandates in the 1903 *Reichstag* elections. From that time onwards, Saxony was called the 'red kingdom'. Nowhere else suggested a greater polarization between the socialist working-class movement and the bourgeois forces than Saxony. The kingdom not only became a centre of radical working-class activists, but also possessed one of the most conservative and reactionary forces in the political

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<sup>666</sup> Ritter, 'Wahlrecht', p. 49. Retallack rightly points out that the strength of the SPD unified the parties of 'law and order'. King Albert of Saxony even "conceded that the existence of a viable socialist caucus ... brought the bürgerlich caucuses tightly together" and thereby provided the government with "a strong majority which stands by it on all questions and makes united cause against Social Democratic attacks" (Retallack, 'Antisocialism', p. 88).

spectrum of the middle and the right. This split was enhanced due to the negligible role of the Centre Party which played a decisive role in the political middle in other provincial parliaments.

The tension and polarization between both camps reached its climax during the Weimar era. Firstly, having been an opposition party since its foundation, the Social Democrats suddenly found themselves in power in Saxony during the first five years of the Republic. They used the time to introduce a major programme of progressive legislation, which caused enormous resentment amongst those on the middle and right.<sup>667</sup> The breaking point came when the left-wing Social Democrat Erich Zeigner held office in 1923. When the Communists joined a coalition government in October that year the alarm bells rang not only with the bourgeois forces in Saxony but also with those at the top Reich level.<sup>668</sup> The famous *Reichsexekution* against Saxony toppled the legal SPD/KPD coalition government which was replaced by a coalition of the middle which increasingly drifted to the right. Henceforth, everything that had been introduced by the SPD was replaced piece by piece by conservative legislation. On both sides the political principle was neither harmony nor co-operation, but outright

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<sup>667</sup> The Saxon SPD reported in a 'proud' manner before the provincial elections in 1930: "The *Bürgertum* is frightened by the power of the proletariat and the ghost of a 'red Saxony' ... Because in no other German province but Saxony, was the working class able to introduce greater fundamental achievements in the areas of local authority, education, social policy and social services, and making the administration more democratic and justice more republican" ('Um das rote Sachsen', *LVZ*, Nr. 123, 26.5.1930).

<sup>668</sup> Herrman Müller expressed at the SPD party conference in Berlin in June 1924 that the Saxon and Thuringian Social Democrats had not acted very wisely in political terms: "The attempt to form a government with the Communists has welded the *Bürgertum* together to an extent, which otherwise would not had taken place ... As a matter of fact I would like to argue, that the Zeigner era has not benefited, but harmed German politics." H. A. Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1924 bis 1930* (Berlin, Bonn, 1988), p. 196.

confrontation and rule according to the principle of 'winner takes all'.

Although SPD and KPD together never received less than 46.6 per cent of the vote in any provincial elections in Saxony during the Weimar Republic, they were not involved in the policy-making process any more until 1933. The disenfranchisement of the working class in 1896 and 1909, the experience of the *Reichsexekution*, the non-existence of a moderating middle force in Saxon politics, the increasingly ultra-radical stance of Saxon Communists, and the rightist orientation of the DVP and DDP led to non-cooperation and more and more polarisation between the representatives of the working classes and the rest. In addition, further isolation of the party was caused by the fact that "the electorate of the Saxon Social Democracy was not composed of different groups of middle- and working classes as in other regions, but consisted mainly of the working class."<sup>669</sup>

The SPD-led governments during the first five years, and particularly the left-wing SPD/KPD coalition of Zeigner in late 1923, brought together the opposition forces of the middle and right. Their slogan became "Never again a Soviet Saxony" and they did everything in their power to ensure that a Marxist government would not come to power again. A government, which in their eyes had not only introduced socialist legislation, but was also responsible for violence, lootings and disruption of the social order, had allowed the Communist rebel leader Max Hölz to terrorize the

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<sup>669</sup> 'Das Koalitionsproblem in Sachsen', DVZ, Nr. 57, 8.3.1930.

Vogtland<sup>670</sup>, and, finally, had terrorised the population with its *Proletarische Hundertschaften*<sup>671</sup>, could not be tolerated.

The following examples highlight the tensions between the organised working class and the majority of remaining Saxon society, and the deep-seated divisions and often open hatred between both groups. Two completely different ways of life, traditions, values and ideologies were clashing with extreme force in the region. The threat of disturbances and violence had not left Saxony since the revolutionary movement in late 1918.

So tense was the general political atmosphere in Chemnitz even during a 'normal' period at the end of 1922, that some remarks by "political agitators" proved enough "for business people to close their shops at lunch time."<sup>672</sup> In early 1923, the police reported that "a group of forty to fifty men marched on various villages outside the town of Werdau and demanded that the peasants hand out potatoes to the unemployed ... Due to the great number of those

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<sup>670</sup> Max Hölz was one of the founding members of the KPD in the town of Falkenstein/AH Auerbach and a popular hero amongst the revolutionary workers. The Saxon conservative forces reminded the Saxon public again and again about his terror and revolutionary activities between 1919 and 1921 in order to rally them against the Marxist parties. Hölz organised revolutionary disturbances in April 1919, after which he had to flee the region. During the *Kapp-Putsch* Hölz returned to the Vogtland and agitated for a proletarian revolution. The *Reichswehr* needed to move in with 10,000 troops to put down an uprising. However, Hölz continued to carry out bomb attacks until he was arrested and imprisoned between mid-1921 and July 1928. During the September 1930 *Reichstag* elections he campaigned for the Communists and also appeared in the Vogtland. See G. Hortschansky, 'Max Hölz - Kämpfer für Freiheit und soziale Gerechtigkeit, für die Macht der Arbeiter und Bauern', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 31 (6) (1989), pp. 775-790.

<sup>671</sup> *Proletarische Hundertschaften* were workers contingents and set up by various *Länder* governments to defend Republican institutions against counter-revolutionary activities from the far right. While the *Hundertschaften* quickly expanded in Saxony after SPD and KPD had come to an agreement in March 1923, they were outlawed in Prussia in May that year. The Saxon *Hundertschaften* were dissolved from the *Reichswehr* on 13 October 1923, shortly before the *Reichsexekution* against Saxony took place (Winkler, *Stabilisierung*, pp. 620-621, 650).

<sup>672</sup> STA D, AH Glauchau, Nr. 24, Wochenbericht 25.11.1922.

involved, the farmers felt bound to give potatoes to the unemployed free of charge." In the town itself "a group of thirty men marched to the bakery and demanded free bread, which they got, as they threatened to smash the windows."<sup>673</sup>

Enormous tensions were caused by the *Proletarische Hundertschaften* in Saxony during 1923. The Saxon police reported how *Hundertschaften* disrupted celebrations of conservative and nationalist citizens in the Erzgebirge in July 1923: "Two *Hundertschaften* visited two towns, allegedly to counter National Socialist intrigues. The former Sergeant Schüler had organised a memorial consecration in Marienberg ... and in Röhrsdorf the 'Association of Young Farmers' celebrated its 25th anniversary ... To negotiate, both localities turned to the state commissioner in charge ... In the first town it was possible to avoid disturbances although both sides carried out parades ... This was not the case in Röhrsdorf ... More than 100 persons from Chemnitz disrupted the parade. Knife fights took place. One of the injured had to be taken to hospital."<sup>674</sup> In Plauen the police complained that the *Hundertschaften* were carrying out tasks which were solely under the authority of the police. Members of the organisation had carried out identity checks and searches among nationalist citizens who had visited a *Deutscher Tag* in Hof.<sup>675</sup> This incident in Plauen in September 1923, was not an isolated case. The presence of the police did not stop a large group of workers in Klingenthal from beating up National Socialists who came back from the same meeting in Hof.<sup>676</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid., Halbwochenbericht 9.3.1923.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid., Halbwochenbericht, 18.7.1923.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid., SäStKa, Nr. 128.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid.



It becomes clear that during the first five years of the Republic, many citizens with nationalist or conservative sympathies were not really able to practice their activities freely in Saxony. The period ended in bloodshed and further hatred between the working class and the rest of Saxon society. When General Müller, the commander of the *Reichswehr* in Saxony, was ordered to 'establish order' again in Saxony, he made sure that all resistance on the left was brutally suppressed. There were casualties in Meißen, Pirna, Chemnitz, Erzgebirge and the Vogtland when his troops marched in. When a crowd refused to disperse in the town of Freiberg, troops started firing, killing twenty-three people and injuring thirty-one.<sup>677</sup>

After the Marxist parties went onto the opposition benches these tensions within society continued. This time, however, the pressure came from the other side. From 1924 onwards, it was the supporters of the Marxist parties who felt pursued and who were limited in their activities. The Social Democrats in Zwickau complained that the bourgeois forces used their majority in the town council to prohibit the traditional annual party festival on the forest clearing close to the town. Instead, they had to celebrate on a sports ground.<sup>678</sup> One of the clearest examples of how little the feelings of the local working class were taken into consideration during that time was shown when the bourgeois majority in parliament in Dresden abolished the holiday on the Ninth of November in December 1929.<sup>679</sup> For the organised working-class movement the traditional celebration to commemorate the day when the Revolution broke out in 1918 had been one of the most

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<sup>677</sup> Winkler, *Stabilisierung*, p. 655.

<sup>678</sup> 'Feste unter rotem Himmel', *SVB*, Nr. 156, 8.7.1929.

<sup>679</sup> *VdSL*, 4. Wp, 18. Sitzung, 10.12.1929.

important events of the year. The abolition of this holiday caused enormous resentment on the left. The incident was also a clear sign of how far the government and the *bürgerliche* members of parliament had already moved to the right to abolish what a large percentage of the citizens, i.e. liberals and Social Democrats, regarded as the symbol of democracy and unity of the Republic. The divisions in society on this occasion were well expressed in a police observation of 1928: "Everywhere the SPD staged well attended Revolution celebrations on 9 November ... This caused the NSDAP, *Stahlhelm* and *Alldeutscher Verband* to organise several commemoration rallies."<sup>680</sup>

These tensions erupted into open violence because of the devastating effects of the economic crisis from the end of the 1920s onwards. The bourgeois groups and the government were no longer capable of guaranteeing security and order. An account from a village in the AH Bautzen in March 1931 stated: "Due to the recently uncontrollable spread of left wing radical elements and their appearance in large numbers the local organisation of the *Landbund*, *Stahlhelm* and NSDAP united to form a self-defence force ... In the event of lootings they would be able to protect the citizens until the arrival of stronger police forces."<sup>681</sup>

(iii) The development of a socialist *Solidargemeinschaft* and Milieu in Saxony

When the working-class movement established itself in earnest after the 1848 revolution in Germany, Saxony was the most important centre of its activities. It was here that the *Allgemeiner*

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<sup>680</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/1, November 1928.

<sup>681</sup> Ibid., Nr. 19087.

*Deutscher Arbeiterverein* was founded and various workers organisations developed.<sup>682</sup> In the elections to the parliament of the North German Union in August 1867, five out of seven socialist mandates came from Saxony. In 1874 the Saxon Social Democrats became the strongest party for the first time in any German province.<sup>683</sup> The kingdom of Saxony was a stronghold of Bebel's and Liebknecht's *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands* (SAPD). Not only did most of the socialist members of the *Reichstag* come from Saxony in the 1870s, but the SAPD also had a much higher party membership in the kingdom than in the rest of the *Reich*. Most of the members of the SAPD lived in the KHS Chemnitz and Zwickau with its traditional textile regions around Chemnitz (linked with machine building), Plauen, Glauchau and Meerane. It was here as well that the SPD press, which became the party's most important method of agitation, originated and developed most forcefully from the late 1860s. The '*Crimmitschauer Bürger- und Bauernfreund*', was the SPD's first daily newspaper. Nearly a third of all its newspapers were published in Saxony by the end of the 1870s.<sup>684</sup>

With the growth of the SPD during Imperial Germany, a whole network of party organisations developed in the fields of leisure, culture and sport. The rapidly expanding network of socialist clubs and organisations around the SPD provided the working class with an alternative to the bourgeois organisations. An SPD sympathizer

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<sup>682</sup> T. Offermann, 'Die regionale Ausbreitung der frühen deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1848/49-1860/64', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 13 (4) (1987), pp. 431-432.

<sup>683</sup> Ritter, 'Wahlrecht', p. 62.

<sup>684</sup> F. Heidenreich, "'...Das Wichtigste Agitationsmittel für die Partei.'" Zur Geschichte der Sozialdemokratischen Presse in Sachsen vor 1933', *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 27 (2) 1991, p. 145.

was not only approached as a political citizen, but the attempt was to reach him as a whole human being. The SPD not only preached class struggle to change the political and economic consciousness of the citizen, but also to liberate the spirit. An attempt was made to remove education, leisure time, family, even love life, in fact, the whole private sphere, from the influence of the bourgeois class enemy and his spiritual-ideological agencies, particularly the church.<sup>685</sup>

The effect of the development of separate organisations for different groups and classes in society was twofold. On the one hand these organisations provided security and an identity for their particular members, but on the other hand they tended to isolate their members in their specific surroundings and prevented communication with other groups in society. The sharp divisions between socialist and bourgeois organisations continued during the Weimar years. In Saxony, but also in Thuringia, the organised working class cut itself off from the rest of the society to a greater extent than in any other region in Germany.<sup>686</sup>

Peter Lösche and Franz Walter describe the development of a *Solidargemeinschaft* ('unified community') among the socialist working class. They define it as a consciousness, a feeling of solidarity and practical, mutual support resulting from similar living conditions or political experiences, which creates mutual

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<sup>685</sup> D. Klenke, 'Hermann Liebmann (1882-1935). Vom Architekten der "proletarischen Mehrheit" in Sachsen zum "Tolerierungs"-Politiker der Ära Brüning', in P. Lösche and M. Scholing and F. Walter (Hrsg.), *Vor dem Vergessen bewahren. Lebenswege Weimarer Sozialdemokraten* (Berlin, 1988), p. 205.

<sup>686</sup> See F. Walter, 'Thüringen - Einst Hochburg der Sozialistischen Arbeiterbewegung?', *Internationale Wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 28 (1) (1992), pp. 21-39.

requirements and interests.<sup>687</sup> Both political historians distinguish between this *Solidargemeinschaft* and a socialist milieu. Whereas the *Solidargemeinschaft* was a more loose-knit community of people with a similar identity and interest, where divisions and competition existed, the milieu was a much stronger and tighter centralization of working-class culture. A socialist milieu was able to develop in working-class districts where active members and voters of the SPD (or, more generally, supporters of Marxism), lived closely together and where this even led to the development of a specific socialist family culture.<sup>688</sup> This concept is important for our attempt to explain the rise of the Nazis in the region, specifically in the KHS Zwickau and Chemnitz which was not only their stronghold in Saxony, but also one of their major bastions in the *Reich*. Nazis (and Communists) were able to make major inroads into areas of SPD *Solidargemeinschaft*, such as the Erzgebirge/Vogtland, but faced enormous opposition and were not very successful in regions where an SPD milieu existed, as in Meißen, Freital, Riesa or Leipzig. Saxony was undoubtedly the most important stronghold of socialist workers culture during the Weimar era. The region around Dresden was the stronghold of the *Jungsozialisten* (Young Socialists) and also various health organisations. The *Verband Volksgesundheit* (Association for People's Health) had its headquarters in Dresden and the *Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund* (Workers' Samaritan Union) sat in Chemnitz. Leipzig was the centre of the *Arbeiter-Turn-und-Sportbund* (Workers' Gymnastic and Sport Union; ATSB). The *Sozialistische Arbeiterjugend* (SAJ) and the *Freidenker*

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<sup>687</sup> P. Lösche and F. Walter, 'Zur Organisationskultur der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 15 (4) (1989), p. 521.

<sup>688</sup> Lösche/Walter, 'Organisationskultur', p. 535; Walter 'Stammland', p. 213.

(Freethinker) in Saxony boasted the greatest membership in Germany.<sup>689</sup> The ATSB, too, the biggest of all socialist leisure organisations, had a prominent position in the region. Not only did 40.2 per cent of all assets of the organisation lie in Saxony, but 22.4 per cent of all members were organised in the region, and it was also here that the biggest football clubs were to be found.<sup>690</sup>

It was in the most solid SPD strongholds such as the towns of Meißen, Freital, Riesa, Leipzig, and the AHs around Döbeln, Dresden and Leipzig, that the Nazis encountered most problems in gaining mass support. In Freital, a centre of SPD activities, seven out of every hundred citizens were organised in one of the ten Socialist Sport Clubs.<sup>691</sup> Leipzig was the headquarters of the *Arbeiter-Turn-und-Sportbund* and the 'Mecca' of football in the Republic. In the whole region of the AHs Grimma, Leipzig and Borna, there were 149 ATSB sport clubs with 18,071 members in 1929. This meant that in more than one third of the villages (35.1%) there was an SPD sport club where nearly six out of every hundred citizens (5.7%) were organised. In the region where the SPD vote collapsed in the last years of the Republic and the Nazis scored their highest percentage, in the AHs Plauen, Oelsnitz and Auerbach, only one fifth of the villages (20.2%) had an SPD sport club and only two out of every hundred citizens (2.0%) were members.<sup>692</sup>

Saxony was also a stronghold of the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (ADGB), by far the largest organisation

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<sup>689</sup> Lösche/Walter, 'Organisationskultur', p. 525; Walter 'Stammland', p. 214.

<sup>690</sup> *Geschäftsbericht über die Jahre 1928/29 des Arbeiter-Turn-und-Sportbundes e.V.* (Leipzig, 1930).

<sup>691</sup> Very recently, see also F. Walter, 'Freital: Das "Rote Wien Sachsens"', in F. Walter and T. Dürr and K. Schmidke (Hrsg.) *Die SPD in Sachsen und Thüringen zwischen Hochburg und Diaspora* (Bonn, 1993).

<sup>692</sup> Calculated from ATSB 1928/29, StDR, (1933), pp. 10/59-10/76.

representing workers in the work place (see Table 10). Forty-three per cent of the local industrial work force were members of the

Table 10: The ADGB in Saxony and the *Reich* in 1931

	branches	members	female	juvenile
<i>Reich</i>	1,295	3,669,257	501,903	179,384
Saxony	117 (9%)	603,735 (16.5%)	120,258 (24.0%)	24,843 (13.8%)

Source: *Jahrbuch Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund 1932*.

ADGB.<sup>693</sup> The very high female percentage reflects the prominence of the textile industry, which was by far the largest employer in the region.

#### (iv) The four SPD districts in Saxony and the Rise of the Nazis

The better the network of Social Democratic organisations was, the more problems the Nazis faced in gaining mass support and in making inroads into the working class. What then was the role of the SPD in the rise of the Nazi Party in Saxony? There were four SPD districts in the province. The SPD district of Leipzig covered the KH Leipzig, the SPD district of Dresden/Bautzen the equivalent KH., and the SPD district of Chemnitz/Erzgebirge and Zwickau/Plauen covered respectively the KH Chemnitz and KH Zwickau. Each of these SPD districts was independent in the management of its internal affairs and possessed varying party networks in their region.

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<sup>693</sup> In the Republic (excluding Saxony and the Saarland), 27 per cent of the industrial working class were organised in the ADGB (Heidenreich, 'Agitationsmittel', p. 141).

Each district faced distinct challenges and responded differently to the enormous economic crisis which unfolded from the late 1920s and the simultaneous rise of the Nazi Party. The SPD districts of Dresden, and especially Leipzig, were extremely successful in defending their position against the rapid Nazi expansion and proved to be the greatest bastion for the SPD in the last elections of

**Table 11:** Percentage of the vote for NSDAP, SPD and KPD in the top eight Nazi strongholds in AHs and towns in Saxony in the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections (percentage of gains/losses since May 1928 in brackets)

	NSDAP	SPD	KPD
AH Auerbach	57.9 (+57.9)	10.6 (-19.8)	19.1 (+4.8)
AH Oelsnitz	57.5 (+47.1)	12.2 (-7.1)	18.4 (+0.5)
AH Plauen	56.2 (+47.0)	14.9 (-20.5)	13.9 (+6.3)
AH Marienberg	54.4 (+51.5)	20.3 (-12.1)	17.7 (+2.7)
AH Freiberg	53.7 (+50.7)	29.0 (-10.9)	9.1 (+3.5)
Werdau	53.3 (+48.1)	20.0 (-12.4)	16.1 (+1.7)
AH Annaberg	52.5 (+46.3)	22.3 (-10.9)	15.9 (+7.6)
Plauen	50.7 (+37.7)	15.8 (-8.4)	21.5 (+4.4)

Source: *StDR*, (1928-32).

the Weimar Republic.<sup>694</sup> At the same time, however, a dramatic collapse of the SPD voting strength took place in the SPD district of Chemnitz/Erzgebirge, and particularly Zwickau/Plauen. The party

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<sup>694</sup> In the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections, the SPD scored highest in the electoral district of Leipzig (33.1%), while Dresden managed the party's fifth best result (31.1%). In the November 1932 *Reichstag* elections the district of Leipzig kept the position of the SPD's best electoral bastion (32.2%) and Dresden improved its position to fourth place (29.5%). In the March 1933 *Reichstag* elections, Leipzig and Dresden became first and second regarding the SPD vote (30.1%/28.4%). Overall it is remarkable how the Left was able to defend its position in Saxony for more than two decades after its stunning election victory in 1903 with 58.5 per cent of the votes. See below all *Reichstag* elections between 1903 and 1933 in Saxony and the percentage of the votes for the Left:

year	1903	1907	1912	1919	1920	1924a	1924b	1928
Left	58.5	48.3	54.7	60.1	53.9	45.9	46.7	50.5

year	1930	1932a	1932b	1933
Left	48.3	45.8	47.2	42.7

Source: Ritter, 'Wahlrecht', p. 63; *StJBSA*, (1919-34).



nearly disintegrated in the last years of the Republic in the area of the Erzgebirge/Vogtland and lost up to 20.5 per cent of its vote between the May 1928 and July 1932 *Reichstag* elections (see Table 11 above). This dramatic decline of the SPD vote from the late 1920s onwards was the acceleration of a process which had already started after the first elections in the Republic in 1919. It was here that the combined parties of the left lost up to 36.9 per cent of their vote between 1919 and 1932 (see Table 12).

The collapse of SPD support in the south-west of Saxony took place in two stages both with a similar degree of decline. The first was in the early 1920s, and the second from the late 1920s onwards. The

**Table 12:** Percentage of loss of the Left (SPD and KPD) in administrative districts of Saxony between the January 1919 and July 1932 *Reichstag* elections:

36.9 AH Auerbach	20.2 Reichenbach	9.8 Döbeln
32.8 AH Zwickau	18.5 Plauen	9.7 Dresden
32.1 AH Schwarzenberg	17.6 AH Freiberg	9.7 Bautzen
30.8 AH Plauen	16.9 AH Rochlitz	9.6 REICH
29.1 AH Werdau	16.7 Chemnitz	9.4 Freital
28.6 Werdau	16.4 AH Großenhain	9.2 Zittau
26.2 AH Stollberg	15.0 Freiberg	9.2 AH Leipzig
24.5 Mittweida	14.6 AH Löbau	8.4 Riesa
24.0 AH Oelsnitz	14.1 Glauchau	8.0 Meißen
23.9 Crimmitschau	14.0 AH Döbeln	8.0 AH Bautzen
23.8 AH Glauchau	11.2 AH Meißen	6.4 AH Borna
23.3 AH Chemnitz	10.5 AH Zittau	5.5 Leipzig
23.0 Aue	10.3 Zwickau	4.7 AH Oschatz
22.7 AH Marienberg	10.3 AH Dresden	4.4 AH Grimma
22.2 AH Annaberg	10.2 AH Pirna	-4.5 AH Kamenz
20.6 AH Flöha	10.2 Wurzen	-8.5 Pirna
20.4 Meerane	10.1 AH Dippoldiswalde	

Source: calculated from ZSäStLA, (1920/21); StDR, (1932).

elections to the *Reichstag* in 1919 was primarily a vote of protest against war, defeat, misery and disorder, and a hope of a new beginning. When the SPD became a government party and the

harsh realities of life became apparent, many of its former voters turned towards other parties. The near disintegration of the SPD in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland - to as little as 10.6 per cent of the overall vote in the AH Auerbach in 1932 - took place between 1928 and 1932. This was partly a result of the enormous scale of the economic crisis combined with the skilful Nazi activities in the area (see the Chapter 'Key study'). However, it was not only that the voting support for the SPD collapsed, but also that the party itself seemed to disintegrate in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland. This was a result of fierce internal disputes over how to respond to the economic crisis, and intense Nazi activities. When, amongst others, the local leader of the left wing, the prominent Max Seydewitz, founded the SAP in October 1931, the SPD district Zwickau/Plauen lost about one-fifth of all its members.<sup>695</sup> In early 1932 the district still reported the continuing activities of *Spalter* in the party.<sup>696</sup> The SPD party district of Zwickau/Plauen was confronted with economic misery and Nazi attacks far earlier than the strong district of Leipzig. Neither did it show such strong party unity as the latter.<sup>697</sup> Party disunity, the sheer scale of Nazi activities and

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<sup>695</sup> 'Bezirksparteitag Zwickau/Plauen', *SVB*, Nr. 44, 22.2.1932.

<sup>696</sup> 'In der Einheit liegt unsere Stärke', *ibid.*, Nr. 38, 15.2.1932. There was a fierce struggle between the radicals and moderates in the SPD district of Zwickau/Plauen. After Seydewitz was thrown out as editor in chief of the *SVB* on 29. September 1931, he was rehabilitated only three days later due to pressure from party members (H. A. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1930 bis 1933* (Bonn, 1990), p. 402).

<sup>697</sup> The *SVB* started to report about the miserable economic situation in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland from early 1929 onwards ('Das Elend im Erzgebirge', *SVB*, Nr. 28, 2.2.1929) and about increased Nazi activities from April 1929 onwards ('Bonzen Betrug', *ibid.*, Nr. 80, 6.4.1929). In numerous appeals, the party members were called to fight the growing Nazi threat. The left-wing tendencies within the SPD district of Zwickau/Plauen became evident during the discussion at the annual district conference in April 1931. One official accused the left wing of being responsible for the bad condition of the district. The majority of the delegates attacked the moderate party leadership in Berlin and 188 out of 226 delegates supported the SPD *Reichstag* members

the extent of the crisis in the south-west of Saxony, however, cannot solely explain the Social Democratic collapse in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland. It was also crucial, that in this area the network of socialist party and leisure organisations did not prove strong and elaborate enough to withstand the attack of the Nazis as they did in many parts of the KH Leipzig and Dresden. As a result, the Nazis managed to make major inroads into the working class. There were far fewer SPD party members in the population in the SPD district of Zwickau than in the rest of Saxony (see Table 13). Whereas the membership figures in the SPD district of Dresden,

**Table 13:** Percentage of party membership to population in Saxon SPD districts

year	Leipzig	Dresden	Chemnitz	Zwickau
1926	2.9	2.4	2.2	1.8
1929	3.2	3.0	2.6	2.0
1931	3.4	2.9	2.6	1.4

Source: *JbDSd*, (1926, 1929, 1931); *StJbSa*, (1924/26).

Chemnitz and Leipzig rose by 6.8%, 5.7%, 2.4% per annum between 1926 and 1929 and stayed fairly stable until the end of 1931, membership grew slowly in Zwickau by 2.2 % p. a. before 1929 and collapsed dramatically after 1930 when the district lost more than a third of its members in 1931 (see Table 14 below). When the enormous crisis started to unfold in the late 1920s, the SPD in the district of Zwickau had a much less sophisticated and deep rooted network of party organisations than the rest of Saxony. The

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who had voted against the building of the *Panzerkreuzer* (ibid., Nr. 85, 13.4.1931). The *LVZ* mentioned increased Nazi activities for the first time in north-western Saxony in September 1929 ('Die Augen auf!', *LVZ*, Nr. 214, 13.9.1929). According to their own figures, about fifty party members and 10 per cent of the SAJ members left the SPD district of Leipzig after the creation of the SAP (ibid., Nr. 38, 15.2.1932).

membership of the SPD and its affiliated organisations in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland, once one of the heartlands of the organised working-class movement in Germany, had not grown in the twentieth century as it had done in the districts of Leipzig and

**Table 14:** Development of SPD membership in the four SPD districts of Saxony (at the end of each year; percentage of female members in brackets):

year	Dresden	Ch-Erzg	Zwickau	Leipzig	Saxony
1910	37,411 (8.3)				99,472
1911	45,780 (9.9)				120,584
1912*	55,885 (9.5)	26,840	17,456	49,144	149,325
1913	59,274 (10.7)				
1914	64,568 (13.1)				
1915	58,287 (11.6)				
1916	52,576 (10.4)				
1917	42,938 (10.2)				
1919	41,388 (14.2)				
1920	37,747 (14.5)				82,755
1921	44,384 (13.3)				100,149
1922	47,184 (13.5)				
1923	76,578 (14.5)	25,609 (18.9)			
1924	58,671 (15.3)	23,185 (20.0)			148,961
1925	49,117 (17.0)	21,581 (20.7)			131,923
1926	43,666 (18.3)	21,127 (20.6)	15,685 (21.6)	38,412 (23.5)	118,890
1927	48,757 (21.1)	22,028 (21.5)	16,030 (22.4)	38,803 (24.1)	125,618
1928	50,467 (22.2)	23,477 (21.6)	16,372 (23.8)	39,519 (24.9)	129,835
1929	54,842 (23.2)	25,493 (23.5)	16,714 (23.9)	41,401 (24.9)	139,098
1930	55,692 (23.8)	26,468 (25.2)	16,694 (25.0)	42,749 (26.3)	141,603
1931	54,631 (24.7)	25,651 (26.5)	12,296 (26.8)	44,447 (27.8)	137,025

Source: *JbDSd*, (1926-1931); 'Jahresbericht 1927 der sozialdemokratischen Bezirksorganisation Chemnitz-Erzgebirge'; 'SPD Bezirksverband Dresden. Geschäftsbericht vom 1. Januar bis zum 31. Dezember 1928'; \*: calculated from G.A. Ritter, 'Das Wahlrecht und die Wählerschaft der Sozialdemokratie im Königreich Sachsen 1867-1914', in G.A. Ritter (ed.), *Der Aufstieg der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (München, 1990), pp. 65-68.

Dresden. One of the reasons for that was that the Erzgebirge/Vogtland, with its many valleys and its position at the edge of Saxony, bordering with Czechoslovakia, was isolated from the rest of the region and also developed specific regional differences and interests. It is no surprise that the SPD experienced

considerable difficulties in establishing a party press in the district of Zwickau at the turn of the century.<sup>698</sup>

It was in this area that the SPD lost massive voting support and the Nazis were able to establish their greatest strongholds from the mid-1920s onwards. By 1930 the Nazis were already the strongest party in the AHs Oelsnitz, Plauen, Schwarzenberg and the towns Werdau and Plauen. At the same time they were reaching for control in the towns of Glauchau, Crimmitschau, Freiberg, Zwickau and Chemnitz (see Table 15 below), places which were the cradle of the German working class. It is true that there were more party branches compared to the number of villages and towns in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland than in most other parts of Saxony,<sup>699</sup> but this network was rather a 'remnant' of the flourishing time of the late 19th century after which the local SPD failed to tie more people to the influence of the party or other affiliated organisations. At the end of 1930 there was only one SPD member for every hundred citizens in the AH Annaberg, 1.1 in the AH Flöha, 1.2 in the AH Marienberg and 1.8 in the AH Glauchau (including Glauchau and Meerane).<sup>700</sup> However, there were also some blank spots on the map where there was no SPD representation at all. The Social Democrats from the AH Marienberg reported in 1929 that there

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<sup>698</sup> Heidenreich, 'Agitationsmittel', pp. 148-149.

<sup>699</sup> SPD district branches 1926      percentage of branches to villages/towns

Dresden	425	32.3
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Leipzig	231	25.9
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Chemnitz	190	70.4
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Zwickau	151	35.7
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Source: *JbDSd* 1926.

The comparatively few and large villages in south-western Saxony also favoured the development of a dense party network.

<sup>700</sup> *Jahresbericht der sozialdemokratischen Bezirksorganisation Chemnitz/Erzgebirge. SPD Bezirksverband Chemnitz/Erzgebirger* 1929., p. 27.

**Table 15: Percentage of vote for the NSDAP in Saxony's administrative districts:**

May 1928	June 1930	July 1932
13.0 Plauen	36.0 Werdau	57.9 AH Auerbach
10.4 AH Oelsnitz	35.6 Plauen	57.5 AH Oelsnitz
9.2 AH Plauen	31.3 AH Oelsnitz	56.2 AH Plauen
7.0 Aue	30.0 AH Plauen	54.4 AH Marienberg
6.2 AH Annaberg	26.7 AH Auerbach	53.7 AH Freiberg
5.9 AH Schwarzenberg	24.6 AH Werdau	53.3 Werdau
5.2 Werdau	23.6 Zwickau	52.5 AH Annaberg
5.2 Freiberg	22.1 Aue	50.7 Plauen
4.4 Zwickau	21.1 AH Annaberg	50.1 AH Dippoldiswalde
4.4 AH Werdau	20.6 Crimmitschau	49.7 Freiberg
3.2 Chemnitz	20.3 AH Schwarzenberg	49.6 AH Werdau
3.1 Reichenbach	20.1 Chemnitz	49.0 AH Schwarzenberg
3.0 AH Freiberg	17.8 AH Marienberg	47.9 AH Flöha
3.0 Zittau	17.7 Mittweida	46.6 AH Großenhain
3.0 Mittweida	17.4 Freiberg	45.9 AH Glauchau
2.9 AH Marienberg	17.3 Bautzen	45.0 AH Stollberg
<b>2.6 Reich</b>	16.9 Zittau	44.9 AH Rochlitz
2.6 AH Stollberg	16.0 AH Flöha	44.7 AH Döbeln
2.5 AH Flöha	15.9 Glauchau	43.5 AH Meißen
2.4 AH Glauchau	15.4 AH Glauchau	43.4 Glauchau
2.3 Dresden	15.2 AH Dippoldiswalde	43.4 Zwickau
2.3 Leipzig	14.9 Reichenbach	43.3 Aue
2.2 AH Großenhain	<b>14.4 Saxony</b>	42.9 AH Oschatz
2.2 Bautzen	14.1 AH Stollberg	42.3 AH Grimma
2.1 Glauchau	14.0 AH Chemnitz	42.0 Bautzen
2.1 AH Chemnitz	13.4 Dresden	41.9 Chemnitz
2.1 AH Grimma	13.3 Wurzen	41.9 AH Kamenz
2.0 AH Auerbach	13.0 AH Freiberg	41.8 Crimmitschau
2.0 AH Zwickau	12.5 AH Zwickau	41.1 AH Bautzen
1.9 Meißen	12.3 AH Rochlitz	40.9 Mittweida
1.9 AH Meißen	12.0 AH Großenhain	40.6 AH Chemnitz
1.8 Döbeln	11.9 Döbeln	40.6 AH Zwickau
1.6 AH Dippoldiswalde	11.5 AH Grimma	40.2 AH Borna
1.5 AH Zittau	11.4 AH Döbeln	39.6 Meerane
1.5 AH Leipzig	10.9 Leipzig	39.6 Zittau
1.4 AH Borna	10.4 AH Meißen	39.3 AH Pirna
1.3 Riesa	10.2 Pirna	38.7 Reichenbach
1.3 AH Rochlitz	10.1 AH Borna	38.7 AH Löbau
1.2 AH Döbeln	10.0 Meißen	38.5 Wurzen
1.1 Wurzen	9.2 AH Zittau	37.7 Dresden
1.0 AH Dresden	8.8 AH Pirna	<b>37.3 Reich</b>
1.0 AH Pirna	8.6 AH Bautzen	37.2 Döbeln
1.0 AH Kamenz	8.2 AH Kamenz	36.3 AH Dresden
0.9 Crimmitschau	8.1 Riesa	33.5 Pirna
0.8 Freital	8.0 AH Dresden	32.9 AH Zittau
0.8 Pirna	8.0 AH Löbau	32.6 Meißen
0.8 AH Oschatz	7.2 AH Oschatz	32.3 Leipzig
0.7 AH Löbau	7.0 AH Leipzig	31.1 Riesa
0.6 AH Bautzen	5.8 Meerane	30.0 AH Leipzig
0.5 Meerane	3.5 Freital	21.6 Freital

Source: calculated from *StJbSa*, (1930), *StDR*, (1928, 1932).

were only sixteen party branches in the thirty-five villages in their district. In nine villages the party only had single members and in ten villages the SPD had no success at all in recruiting active followers.<sup>701</sup> When the economic crisis set in, the party network was far too loose and there were not many SPD activists to respond to increasing Nazi activities. Party officials expressed a willingness to "counter the attack of the Nazis through [party] loyalty". With this tactic they also hoped to be able to "attract the thousands of uprooted middle class citizens."<sup>702</sup> (!) Moreover, the SPD youth organisation, which was needed so desperately to counter the youthful and active Nazi movement, hardly existed in the Erzgebirge. There were only 108 SAJ members in the AH Marienberg and 157 in the AH Annaberg.<sup>703</sup>

Areas which had no Social Democratic party branches, secured an SPD vote far below the average in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland. The SPD Chemnitz/Erzgebirge reported after the 1928 *Reichstag* elections, where it had scored 33.3 per cent of the vote, that in eighty-nine villages with a population of 50,720 where there were no SPD branches, the party had only received 5,243 votes.<sup>704</sup> In the same report the Social Democrats praised the small town of Glösa, situated at the northern periphery of Chemnitz, with about 4,000 citizens, as having the best membership ratio with 15.3 members for every 100 inhabitants. This was due to a large settlement in which many SPD officials lived together in a tiny area. This was a place where a deep rooted socialist milieu developed and which

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<sup>701</sup> Ibid.

<sup>702</sup> Ibid.

<sup>703</sup> *Jahresbericht 1930 Sozialdemokratische Bezirksorganisation Chemnitz Erzgebirge*, p. 28.

<sup>704</sup> *Jahresbericht 1928 Sozialdemokratische Bezirksorganisation Chemnitz Erzgebirge*, p. 8.

remained a solid SPD stronghold even in the greatest crisis. The SPD still scored 50 per cent of the votes in the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections (a loss of 6.8 per cent since 1929), while the Nazis only managed to get 23.3 per cent. The Left combined, polled 69.6 per cent of the vote (a loss of 3.8 per cent since 1929).<sup>705</sup>

The importance to the SPD of a good membership ratio to the population in their attempt to withstand the Nazi onslaught becomes evident in the KHS Leipzig and Dresden, which did much better in defending the Socialist voting strength. The two party sub-districts which had the worst SPD membership figures per head of the population in both KHS, Freiberg and Döbeln<sup>706</sup>, were the ones where the Nazis were most successful in the region.

There were severe limits to a well organised and functioning SPD party organisation in the KHS Zwickau and Chemnitz. In the district of Chemnitz the SPD headquarters complained at the end of 1928 that 146 out of 203 party branches had not reported their local results of the traditional annual campaign week to attract new members.<sup>707</sup> Either they did not participate in the campaign or there was simply no success to report. In the campaign a year later, twenty-nine SPD branches only managed to win one single new party member in the AH Rochlitz.<sup>708</sup> In the AH Annaberg, sixteen SPD party branches organised as little as thirty-five public meetings throughout the whole of 1929. The remaining twelve

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<sup>705</sup> ChVSt, 13.5.1929 and *ibid.*, 1.8.1932.

<sup>706</sup> See *SPD Bezirksverband Dresden. Geschäftsbericht vom 1. Januar bis zum 31. Dezember 1928*, p. 63; 'Mitteilungen des Bezirksvorstandes der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Leipzigs', Nr. 31, 10.2.1928.

<sup>707</sup> *SPD Chemnitz/Erzgebirge 1928*, p. 9.

<sup>708</sup> *Jahresbericht des Bezirksvorstandes der SPD Bezirk Leipzig 1929*, UB Rochlitz-Burgstädt-Mittweida.



branches of the district did not have a single public meeting.<sup>709</sup> The Nazis did their part to destabilize the Social Democrats by challenging them with numerous meetings in local SPD strongholds.<sup>710</sup> SPD officials described their own performance as "not satisfying", and concluded in a resigned tone about their organisational weaknesses and limits in the Erzgebirge: "Although there was a will to work, there were too many difficulties".<sup>711</sup>

Whereas the Social Democrats in Leipzig were able to match the Nazis' increasing propaganda activities and led the fight of the organised working-class movement against them up to the very end, their colleagues in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland could not adequately respond to the continuous Nazi onslaught (see tables). There Nazis not only organised increasingly more public meetings than the Marxist parties, but also managed to attract more people to their meetings than the latter.

Throughout Weimar Germany, the SPD encountered severe limits to its expansion in rural areas which were far away from urban working-class strongholds. In Saxony, the feature of the 'industrial village' together with a long socialist tradition made the SPD also strong in many rural areas. This was particularly so around the SPD's urban strongholds in Meißen, Riesa, Leipzig and Dresden. In other rural regions, however, the local SPD only possessed a very loose organisational network. Again and again party officials complained about the difficulty of attracting female supporters. In the AH Rochlitz there were fifty SPD branches with not a single

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<sup>709</sup> *SPD Chemnitz/Erzgebirge 1929*, p. 9.

<sup>710</sup> The SPD district of Glauchau and Stollberg reported that the Nazis held numerous meetings in their best places in order to challenge their strongholds (*SPD Chemnitz/Erzgebirge 1930*, p. 15).

<sup>711</sup> *SPD Chemnitz/Erzgebirge 1929*, p. 27.

female party member.<sup>712</sup> But it was exactly here, that the Nazis were most active in their propaganda activities and also managed to attract working-class support. In 1929 SPD party officials from the same district warned that the Nazis "need to be closely watched. Unfortunately, if workers face poverty and misery, (they) run into the arms of ... the Hitlerguard."<sup>713</sup>

Although the Saxon Nazis were active in urban and rural areas from 1925 onwards, they found it naturally much easier to recruit mass support in the 'organisational vacuum' of the countryside. An alleged 'urban plan', in which the Nazis tactic was to concentrate on winning urban strongholds until spring 1929, cannot be observed.<sup>714</sup> The Saxon police reported in January 1928: "Again the NSDAP preferred to be active in rural areas."<sup>715</sup> Furthermore, due to enormous resistance the Nazis encountered in urban areas, they were often simply forced out into the countryside. The Nazis themselves admitted that their SA in Freiberg was not able to protect two local party meetings in 1926, "which would have been a sweeping success if they had not been disturbed by the *Kommune* (Marxists)."<sup>716</sup> Instead, the SA was beaten up twice on these occasions by Marxist supporters. Henceforth, "the activities of the Freiberg SA was limited mainly to meetings in villages."<sup>717</sup>

In places where long socialist traditions combined with increased party and organisational activities before the end of the Weimar Republic, Nazi electoral success was limited even in the

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<sup>712</sup> SPD Chemnitz/Erzgebirge 1928, p. 9.

<sup>713</sup> SPD Leipzig 1929, UB Rochlitz-Burgstädt-Mittweida.

<sup>714</sup> Orlow, *Nazi Party*, pp. 90 ff., 138 ff.

<sup>715</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/1, January 1928.

<sup>716</sup> NSDAP Freiberg, p. 14.

<sup>717</sup> Ibid.

Erzgebirge/Vogtland. In the small town of Auerbach/AH Stollberg, the organised working-class movement began to develop during the time of Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Laws. For some years seven local SPD members walked fifteen kilometres to the party meeting in Chemnitz once a week. Usually they came back late in the night with Socialist leaflets and newspapers in their rucksacks. In 1899 they founded their own local SPD branch. A consumer cooperative was established in the 1890s, a workers singing club in 1900 and a workers gymnast club in 1905. During the Weimar era these organisations were joined by Workers' Samaritans, freethinkers, the SAJ, a building cooperative and a house renting club. In addition, about twenty workers were active in the socialist theatre group in Chemnitz. When a local KPD branch was founded in March 1920 the working class possessed a second political representative.<sup>718</sup> The small town with its roughly 4,100 citizens was clearly dominated by the working class. Less than 5 per cent of the population was employed in agriculture and nearly all of the 2,826 strong industrial work force were employed in the textile industry producing socks. The town was the perfect place for a socialist stronghold. It was predominantly working class, with nearly two-thirds of the work force employed in places with more than fifty workers. The town possessed a long socialist tradition, celebrating the first *Maifeier* in 1893 and experiencing its first strike in 1907. Moreover, in contrast to most other places, Social Democrats and Communists often co-operated to secure a socialist

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<sup>718</sup> for this discussion see H. Dittmann, 'Zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung in Auerbach', *Der Heimatfreund für den Kreis Stollberg/Erzgebirge*, (März-Juli) (1963), pp. 57-59, 74-75, 93-94, 115-117, 133-135.

majority or to fight the growing threat of the Nazis.<sup>719</sup> In that kind of environment, the Nazis encountered difficulties even in the Erzgebirge. The SPD managed to stay above 30 per cent of the vote and the combined Left kept its majority in the town until the March 1933 elections. Still, the Nazis managed to make major inroads even in this 'model working-class community' by becoming the biggest party in July 1932 and scoring more than 35 per cent of the vote.

The towns of Meißen, Freital, Pirna, and the towns and surrounding region of Dresden, Leipzig, Riesa and Döbeln were areas with a high level of SPD activity. The SPD sub-district of greater Leipzig was pursuing the most sophisticated and effective socialist educational work in Weimar Germany. This was at the same time the area where the Nazis admitted encountering most difficulties when they reflected on their 'seizure of power' in Saxony: "In and around Leipzig ... the clashes were the most severe and took the heaviest toll of human life."<sup>720</sup> The Workers Education Institute trained officials and organised events in the whole country, and a Local Educational Committee organised an enormous number of educational events. In 1930 it organised thirty-three educational courses on 138 evenings concentrating on current political affairs and questions on socialism. The courses were attended by 1,137 people (717 male/420 female) of which 47 per cent were workers and 15 per cent white collar workers.<sup>721</sup> The Leipzig' SPD managed

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<sup>719</sup> Kreisleitung Stollberg der SED (Hrsg.), *Weil du auch ein Arbeiter bist! Der Kampf der Arbeiterklasse des Kreises Stollberg gegen das Wiedererstarken des Imperialismus und Militarismus in der Weimarer Republik, gegen Faschismus und Kriegsgefahr (1924-1933)* (1986), p. 87.

<sup>720</sup> Seven Nazi members lost their life in the region during the *Kampfzeit* (*Der Gau Sachsen*, p. 125).

<sup>721</sup> *SPD Leipzig 1930*, p. 368.

to attract high calibre national and international speakers throughout the year and supported their educational efforts with a network of forty-five libraries, book shops and the use of mass media (the Educational Committee organised the showing of 130 films). The cultural and political climax for the local Social Democrats were the commemoration ceremonies for the *Märzgefallenen* (those who died during the *Kapp-Putsch*), May the First celebrations, constitutional and revolutionary celebrations and ceremonies in commemoration of Marx, Engels, Lassalle, Wilhelm Liebknecht or Rosa Luxemburg. Mass participation in these events underlined the deep rooted socialist conscience and tradition of the working class of Leipzig and the region around it.<sup>722</sup> Table 16 shows that the SPD managed to mobilize far more supporters at

Table 16: Participants at SPD and KPD *Maifeiern* (percentage of all citizens in brackets)

	1930		1931	
	SPD	KPD	SPD	KPD
Leipzig	15,000 (2.2)	?	17,000 (2.5)	8,200 (1.2)
Plauen	1,500 (1.3)	1,500 (1.3)	1,700 (1.5)	1,900 (1.7)

Source: STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, Mai 1930, April 1931.

these events in Leipzig than their party colleagues were able to rally in Plauen. The latter was a town where the Nazis were already the biggest party in 1930.

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<sup>722</sup> The police in Leipzig reported wreath-laying ceremonies at all cemeteries in commemoration for the *Märzgefallenen* on the morning of 21 March 1926 (STA L, PP-V 3103, Wochenbericht Nr. 9, 1926). The SPD and Socialist unions celebrated May the First with 18,000 participating in a long demonstration march and 30,000 visitors viewing the spectacle in a stadium. Afterwards 4,000 torchbearers marched into the city centre (ibid., Wochenbericht Nr.4, 1928). 10,000 SPD supporters gathered to witness the consecration of the Bebel-Liebknecht commemorative plaque in Borsdorf/AH Grimma (ibid., AH Döbeln 2409, Jahresbericht 1930, p. 2).

Other SPD districts showed activities similar to those in Leipzig. Not only did they organise many educational courses or lectures, but also a very high percentage of pupils participated in *Jugendweihen*<sup>723</sup>, expressing open rejection of the bourgeois state and of the traditional role of religion and the church (see Table 17). Moreover, SPD strongholds were areas with the highest rate of people leaving the church. They were also the region where there

**Table 17:** *Jugendweihen* and educational activities of the SPD in the district of Dresden

SPD subdistrict	percentage of pupils participating in <i>Jugendweihen</i>	educational courses	single lectures
Zittau	28.0	5	15
Löbau	12.9	10	41
Bautzen	14.0	4	33
Dresden-Stadt	24.0	?	?
Groß-Dresden Land	28.0	34	139
Freital	45.0	13	92
Meißen	24.3	12	48
Pirna	?	16	1
Freiberg	?	2	-

Source: *SPD Bezirksverband Dresden. Geschäftsbericht vom 1. Januar bis zum 31. Dezember 1929.*

was a sharp confrontation between protestant and nationalist thinking bourgeoisie and freethinking socialist working class. Between August 1919 and December 1926, 21.3 per cent of all protestants left the church in Freital, 17.3 per cent in Leipzig, 15.7 per cent in the AH Leipzig, 13.1 per cent in Meißen, 12.3 per cent in the AH Zwickau and 11.2 per cent in the AH Chemnitz.<sup>724</sup> These were areas where the combination of socialist traditions and dense

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<sup>723</sup> Literally 'Youth Consecration'. An act of consecration for juveniles in the socialist, non-denominational movement.

<sup>724</sup> calculated from F. Burkhardt, 'Die Kirchenaustritts- und Kircheneintrittsbewegung im Zeitraum 1919 bis 1930 mit einem Rückblick auf die Entwicklung der kirchlichen Statistik', *ZSäStLA*, (1931), p. 194.

party and organisational networks had created a socialist milieu which proved firm and solid even when the society plunged into a crisis of enormous proportions and the National Socialists promised a way out.

**(v) National Socialist Factory Cell Organisation (NSBO)**

A crucial area to examine in any investigation of working-class support for the Nazi Party is their strength in the actual work place, on the factory councils. Since the re-foundation of the NSDAP in 1925 there were discussions within the party about the creation of their own union organisation. Claiming to be a workers party which also aimed to win support amongst the working classes, there was a need for the NSDAP to take a stand towards strikes, wage disputes and reduction in working hours, especially in the industrial areas of the *Reich*. However, it was only due to pressure from below - NSDAP party members in Berlin had started to set up their own factory cells from 1927/28 onwards - that the party leadership decided on the creation of the NSBO at the party conference in 1929. Initially, the task of the NSBO was purely propagandist and there was no intention of setting up an opposition organisation to the established unions which would carry out simply economic functions. It was only in spring 1931 that the NSBO officially participated in the elections of the factory councils for the first time. The NSDAP party leadership had recognised the NSBO as an official employee organisation and had given out orders that employed party members had to join only a few months before the elections.

The reason for the delayed and half-hearted development of the NSBO was that it presented somewhat a contradiction for the Nazi strategy in Munich. Hitler wanted workers to vote for the NSDAP, become members of the party and join the SA, but was far less enthusiastic about the creation of their own trade unions. For him it did not seem very promising to take on the ADGB. Moreover, his strategy was to come to power through elections in the *Reichstag*, not like the Communists through a general strike. Getting directly involved in the relationship between workers and employers, the Nazis were bound to alienate one side. And lastly, there was a contradiction between forming employee unions and advocating a 'national community'.

As Saxony was the most industrialised region in Germany with a large working class, one would expect the local Nazis to be particularly active in the attempt to build up a foothold amongst workers at their work place. However, the NSBO leadership organ, *Der Betrieb*, stated that the *Gau* Saxony only ranked sixteenth amongst all Nazi *Gaue* regarding NSBO membership numbers in May 1931, tenth in June, and third in July and August of the same year.<sup>725</sup> This was surprising, because Saxony possessed by far the largest working class and most party members of all Nazi *Gaue*. A rather small *Gau* like Danzig, with 9,093 party members, had more NSBO members in May and June 1931 than Saxony, which had nearly ten times as many party members than the former in early 1933 (87,079).<sup>726</sup>

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<sup>725</sup> V. Kratzenberg, *Arbeiter auf dem Weg zu Hitler? Die Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellen-Organisation. Ihre Entstehung, Ihre Programmatik, Ihr Scheitern 1927-1934* (Frankfurt/Main, Bern, New York, Paris, 1989), p. 209.

<sup>726</sup> NSDAP Parteistatistik 1935.



Several reasons explain the late and slow development of the NSBO in Saxony. First of all, as in the Ruhr area, there were no influential personalities like Engels or Muchow in Berlin, who did so much in fostering the development of the NSBO in the *Reich* capital.<sup>727</sup> Secondly, the urban centres in Saxony were a stronghold of the ADGB.<sup>728</sup> Success for the NSBO seemed very unlikely. Overall, the Saxon Nazis were much more active in the establishment of special organisations for the middle classes than for the working classes in the second half of the 1920s.<sup>729</sup> Finally, the Nazi stronghold in Saxony, the Vogtland/Erzgebirge, was dominated by small and medium scale industries where union organisations were not widespread at all. There was no need for NSBO cells in these areas. When local Nazi officials met for a district meeting in the Erzgebirge in late 1931, there was no NSBO branch represented. Instead, a group for 'trade, business and industry' discussed the latest policies.<sup>730</sup>

This explains why the propaganda of the Saxon Nazis was rather aimed to win over the working class as such, until the end of the 1920s, rather than trying to gain a foothold at the actual workplace. Still, throughout the 1920s there were some noticeable Nazi efforts to establish themselves in the factories. Saxon Nazis already targeted factories and their work forces with leaflets as

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<sup>727</sup> Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, pp. 171-172.

<sup>728</sup> Forty-three per cent of the industrial work force in Saxony were members of the ADGB, which compared to 27 per cent in the rest of Germany (excluding the Saarland). Heidenreich, 'Agitationsmittel', p. 141.

<sup>729</sup> In contrast to special party organisations for middle class people, the Saxon Nazi press does not really mention any specific organisations directed towards the working classes before 1930. For the former there was e.g. the creation of a white collar group on 9 March 1927 in Dresden (*NSfS*, Nr. 17, 24.4.1927); there were Nazi activities in the DHV from 1928 on; and in November 1929 the National Socialist middle class groups merged together to an *economic union* (*SB*, Nr. 46, 17.11.1929).

<sup>730</sup> *FK*, Nr. 250, 6.11.1931.

early as 1923.<sup>731</sup> National Socialists were involved in the *Völkische Kampfgewerkschaft*, a nationalist union which founded a branch in August 1924 and organised a propaganda evening in Zwickau in April 1925.<sup>732</sup> The first mention of Nazi factory cells in Saxony was in July 1929. The police reported that there was an "effort to build 'white cells' in all work places of industry and agriculture ... Through a tight organisation the Nazi members have the task of attempting to create cells in every big factory."<sup>733</sup>

The first public NSBO meeting in Leipzig was on 15 April 1930.<sup>734</sup> Soon after that the Nazis reported their success in the infiltration of large factories in the town<sup>735</sup>, there were reports of success in factory council elections in Zwickau<sup>736</sup>, and in May 1930 the Nazis started with the creation of NSBO cells in Dresden<sup>737</sup>. However, the establishment of the NSBO in Saxony was a slow process. Not only did the Nazis themselves not mention the NSBO organisation as such during their Saxon *Gau* meeting in Plauen in June that year<sup>738</sup>, the police alike reported: "The attempts of the Nazis in spring 1930 to create the NSBO in the region only started to show some concrete success at the end of 1930."<sup>739</sup> The development gained a decisive push by the stunning election success of the NSDAP in the September 1930 *Reichstag* elections. The next day the Saxon Nazis issued the slogan: "Clear front in Saxony! National Socialism against Marxism. *Bürgertum* is crushed ... We are going

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<sup>731</sup> STA D, AH Glauchau, Nr. 24, Halbwochenbericht 9.6.1923.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid., SÄStKa, Nr. 131.

<sup>733</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/3, Juli 1929.

<sup>734</sup> SB, Nr. 48, 17.4.1930.

<sup>735</sup> Ibid., Nr. 63, 8.5.1930.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid., Nr. 56, 29.4.1930.

<sup>737</sup> Ibid., Nr. 68, 14.5.1930.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid., Nr. 84, 3.6.1930.

<sup>739</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 19087.

into the factories, we are going to the unemployed."<sup>740</sup> Soon afterwards, official orders to create NSBO cells were given out for Chemnitz and Dresden. *Der Freiheitskampf* requested that in Chemnitz "in all work places, everywhere where there is manual work, there is to be the immediate creation of NSBO cells along tight organisational lines ... Every work place is going to send at least two members to the NSBO leadership meeting on 5 October."<sup>741</sup>

On a general level, the aim of the Nazis was to win over workers from the Marxist parties. More specifically, however, they clearly aimed to attract disillusioned workers with nationalist sentiments. Nazi officials explained to their party members in Dresden: "Our fight is against Marxism which destroys every aspect of the *Volk* ... We must expose the guilt of the Marxist parties, their leaders and supporters, for this endless misery and poverty of the German *Volk*. This work is to be done through the NSBO."<sup>742</sup>

The NSBO in Dresden seemed the most active during this phase. Two meetings were announced and a lecture series was planned to cover issues like works council legislation, labour law and wage settlement law during the winter 1930/31.<sup>743</sup> *Der Freiheitskampf* also mentioned NSBO existence in Plauen (FK, Nr. 28, 3.2.1931; FK, Nr. 109, 12.5.1931), Zwickau (FK, Nr. 89, 17.4.1931), and Meißen (FK, Nr. 231, 3.10.31). By the end of 1931 the police noted the lively Nazi propaganda for the NSBO.<sup>744</sup> By that time Saxony had

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<sup>740</sup> FK, Nr. 39, 15.9.1930.

<sup>741</sup> Ibid., Nr. 54, 2.10.1930.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid.

<sup>744</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, November 1931.

eight NSBO *Gau* speakers, four from Dresden, two from Chemnitz, and one each from Zwickau and Plauen.<sup>745</sup>

Overall, however, these were isolated efforts in some major towns. The creation of the NSBO network proved to be a rather slow and difficult process for the Nazis in Saxony. In Dresden no Nazi speaker was allowed to put forward his ideas in a meeting of landlords, employees and consumers against the beverage tax in early 1930.<sup>746</sup> In Aue, union representatives imposed silence on Nazis when they tried to influence a meeting in a paper factory in July 1930.<sup>747</sup> For the elections to the factory councils in spring 1931 there was only one small article in *Der Freiheitskampf* attempting to rally workers behind the NSBO.<sup>748</sup> The hand-written leaflet which announced a public NSBO meeting of the 'insurance' group in Leipzig in August 1931, does not give the impression of very sophisticated NSBO propaganda capabilities at the time.<sup>749</sup> This not only stood in sharp contrast to the massive propaganda in the press and the campaign that was especially set up for the elections to the Agricultural Chambers in Saxony in May the same year, but it was also a pitiful effort by comparison with what Böhnke describes in the Ruhr as "incredible propaganda effort" for the factory council elections in 1931.<sup>750</sup>

What kind of NSBO cells existed in Saxony before 1932? One quarter of Saxon NSBO members was working in the textile industry, about one-sixth in mining, and the rest belonged to the

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<sup>745</sup> FK, Nr. 188, 14.8.31.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid., Nr. 84, 7.1.1930.

<sup>747</sup> The NSDAP responded, however, by calling the work force to a protest meeting (ibid., Nr. 194, 21.8.1931).

<sup>748</sup> Ibid., Nr. 58, 10.3.31.

<sup>749</sup> BA, NS 26, Nr. 2113.

<sup>750</sup> Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*, p. 174.

branches 'transport', 'electricity and water', 'chemicals', 'metals', 'foodstuffs', 'tobacco', and 'employees in banking and insurance' and 'blue collar workers'.<sup>751</sup> When one compares the membership figures with the distribution of the work force in the different industrial sectors in Saxony, it becomes clear how important regional conditions were for the specific spread of Nazi cells.

In Dresden there were cells within the categories 'tram', 'civil service' ('state insurance institution', 'courts', 'public prosecutor's office', 'inland revenue office west', 'town hall Johannstadt'), and 'employees'. As Dresden was the administrative capital of Saxony, it is no surprise that local Nazis were particularly active among the civil service. In a public meeting they advised them to make ample use of their right to freedom of speech against the Marxists.<sup>752</sup> In Chemnitz there were NSBO cells in the following sectors: 'municipal removal service', 'trams', '*Schönherrwerke*', '*J. E. Reinecker*', 'bakers', 'butchers' and the 'catering trade'.<sup>753</sup> The Nazis were also trying to infiltrate skilled professions like brick yard workers, brick carriers, toy-makers, basket-makers, brush-makers and box-makers.<sup>754</sup> By the end of 1931 the Chemnitz' NSBO had established an organisational framework. There was a treasurer and other officials in charge of office work, press, propaganda, intelligence and *Uschla*.<sup>755</sup> In Leipzig there were NSBO cells in the following sectors: 'civil service', 'post' (assistants and workers), machine

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<sup>751</sup> *Der Betrieb*, 2 (4) 1932 (in Kratzenberg, *Arbeiter und Hitler*, p. 228).

<sup>752</sup> *FK*, Nr. 89, 13.11.1930.

<sup>753</sup> The Nazis were supporting the bakers against the partial lifting of the night baking ban, which brought advantages for big bakeries (ibid., Nr. 175, 30.7.31). The 'catering trade' was founded on the 26.6.1931 with seventeen members (ibid., Nr. 186, 12.8.1931).

<sup>754</sup> Ibid., Nr. 275, 26.11.1931.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid., Nr. 229, 1.10.1931.

factory *Brehmer* (FK, Nr. 32, 7.2.31), 'theatre' (FK, Nr. 201, 29.8.31), 'municipal workers', 'banking and insurance', '*Kraftdroschke*', 'life insurance' (FK, Nr. 237, 10.10.31), 'artisans', and factory cells at *LNN* and *Interverga* (FK, Nr. 277, 28.11.31). The NSBO 'workers school' in Leipzig covered issues like 'accident insurance at the work place' or 'public welfare' and needed to be attended by all party officials once a week from the end of 1930 onwards.<sup>756</sup> The NSBO 'speaker school' was so "successful" that the course had to be split into two groups<sup>757</sup>, and an NSBO circular was introduced in Leipzig in November 1931<sup>758</sup>. However, the first two public NSBO meetings in Leipzig did not take place until 13 November that year.<sup>759</sup>

Nazi activists openly admitted their difficulties in setting up a dense NSBO network in Saxony. The NSBO district leader of Leipzig and the surrounding area, Peitsch, reported at the end of 1931 how slow and difficult the creation of the NSBO had been in the traditional working-class party stronghold: "Since its creation the NSBO has had to go through the same difficult struggle as the local NSDAP party organisation has had for more than five years."<sup>760</sup> According to Peitsch the 'civil servant' groups were the most successful, but the Nazis also had strong positions in the '*Kraftdroschken*', 'catering business' and the 'bakers' guild'. "In particular the groups 'insurance', 'banking', 'municipal utilities' and 'post' staged successful meetings."<sup>761</sup> There were fifteen special

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<sup>756</sup> Ibid., Nr. 254, 30.10.1931.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid., Nr. 264, 12.11.1931.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid., Nr. 283, 5.12.1931.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid., Nr. 260, 7.11.1931.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid., Nr. 264, 12.11.31.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid.

organisations with fifty-two cells in the district. This was an extremely small figure, as it meant that in every 1,000 companies in the area there were only six NSBO cells.<sup>762</sup> It was not so much the industrial structure which made Leipzig a less favourable place than Peitsch wanted (i.e. publishing, tobacco and metal industry), but rather the strong and widespread support for the traditional working-class parties, their affiliated organisations and unions.

The situation was not very different in other regions. NSBO activists found it "incredibly difficult in the former 'red bastion' of Crimmitschau. Only about five to six workers from factories with several hundred employees came to our factory council meetings ... at the end of 1931 the membership had risen to 120, and by the middle of 1932 it only exceeded 300."<sup>763</sup> Counting only the seventy-three large-scale factories with 10,122 workers, the NSBO had only thirty members for every 1,000 workers in this traditional textile town by the middle of 1932. However, as the NSDAP received 41.7 per cent of the vote in the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections, beating the SPD's 32.6 per cent to become largest party, it seems likely that a substantial number of workers, who were organised in SPD trade unions, must have voted for the Nazis at the same time.

The Saxon NSBO, however, had some successes too. An example of this was the mining town of Oelsnitz/AH Stollberg, a traditional Marxist stronghold.<sup>764</sup> The great economic crisis did not hit local

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<sup>762</sup> Calculated from *StJbSA*, (1924/25).

<sup>763</sup> *15 Jahre Ortsgruppe Crimmitschau* (1937), p. 29.

<sup>764</sup> For this discussion see J. Keller, 'Drei Jahrzehnte später - Aus dem Kampf der Bergarbeiter unter Führung der KPD gegen Krisenpolitik und Faschismus in Oelsnitz/Erzgebirge', *Der Heimatfreund für den Kreis Stollberg Auerbach* (1963: pp. 90-92, 113-115, 131-133, 174-175; 1964: pp. 117-120, 138-140, 174-178).

coal mining before spring 1930, when overall coal output fell by 14.8 per cent and by another 10 per cent in 1931. However, the miners in the town had been hit by severe economic rationalisation throughout the 1920s. Between 1924 and 1931, eight pits (out of thirteen), seven boiler houses (out of ten) and four power stations (out of five) had been shut down. Small business was also hit by the economic slump. There were two bankruptcies or petitions for bankruptcies in 1929, three in 1930, seven in 1931, and two in 1932. At the end of 1930 nearly 1,000 people were registered as unemployed out of about 19,000 inhabitants. By January 1932, the figure had risen to 1,502. Throughout the 1920s the mining unions were dominated by the SPD. When the crisis in coal mining set in, however, the Communists organized a vigorous agitation amongst the suffering miners and received most votes in the three biggest mines in the elections to the factory councils. The Nazis, who for the first time participated in the elections of 1931, received 8.2 per cent of the votes in the four mines where they participated.<sup>765</sup> Furthermore, as in many places in Saxony, they also made considerable efforts to attract the unemployed by agitating in front of the employment office in Oelsnitz.

However, the fact that the Saxon Nazis hardly published any results of the elections to the factory councils suggests that overall they did badly. *Der Freiheitskampf* reported vaguely about "success" in the factory council elections in the 'Saxon state insurance' in

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<sup>765</sup> Keller 'Bergarbeiter', (1964), p. 119. This is along the lines of the NSBO results in the mines in the Ruhr, where it only received an average of 3.5 per cent average in all mines in 1931, but was able to gain up to 20 per cent of the vote in single mines (G. Mai, 'Die Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellen-Organisation. Zum Verhältnis von Arbeiterschaft und Nationalsozialismus', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 31 (4) (1983), p. 597.



Dresden.<sup>766</sup> In Chemnitz the NSBO gained 296 votes at *J. E. Reinecker* (SPD: 789, RGO: 587)<sup>767</sup>, and 152 votes in the 'tram' sector in June 1931 (SPD: 812, RGO: 268, Saxon Community Civil Servants: 184).<sup>768</sup> Despite the Nazis public joy about success in the metal industry in Leipzig<sup>769</sup>, in reality they only received 0.3 per cent of the vote.<sup>770</sup> Table 18 includes the few results published by the Nazis in Leipzig. It shows that the NSBO gained votes among

**Table 18:** Factory council election results in Leipzig in 1931 (number of seats in brackets)

	Marxists	NSBO
LNN		
<i>Arbeiterrat</i>	360 (1)	96 (1)
<i>Angestelltenrat</i>	? (0)	? (7)
<i>Betriebsrat</i>	? (6)	? (4)
Machine factory <i>Kleim &amp; Ungerer</i>		
<i>Arbeiterrat</i>	130 (5)	38 (1)
<i>Betriebsrat</i>	? (4)	? (1)
Paint factory <i>Springer &amp; Möller</i>		
<i>Arbeiterrat</i>	138 (5)	49 (2)
<i>Betriebsrat</i>	? (4)	? (1)
General Transport Society		
<i>Angestelltenrat</i>	208 (5)	78 (2)
<i>Betriebsrat</i>	? (7)	? (1)
Municipal Electricity Board		
<i>Angestelltenrat</i>	? (4)	? (1)
Spinning mill <i>Tittel &amp; Krüger</i>		
<i>Betriebsrat</i>	? (9)	? (1)
Transport Anlagen <i>A. Bleicher &amp; Co.</i>		
<i>Arbeiterrat</i>	RGO 91 (2), SPD 246 (5)	44 (1)

Source: *FK*, Nr. 80, 7.4.1931.

office workers and manual workers. The incomplete listing of results which the Nazis thought were somehow presentable, suggests further weakness.

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<sup>766</sup> *FK*, Nr. 82, 9.4.1931.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 76, 31.3.1931.

<sup>768</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr. 11126/4, Juni 1931.

<sup>769</sup> *FK*, Nr. 80, 7.4.1931.

<sup>770</sup> see Table 18.

Although the Saxon NSBO showed increased activity by the end of 1931, its impact remained very limited. The intelligence service of the KH Leipzig observed in its annual report for 1931 that "the NSDAP had created factory cells and *Fachgruppen-Verbände* after the Communist pattern and is likely to have some success in some factories at the end of the year."<sup>771</sup> However, the report went on: "The old union organisations, led by the ADGB, still continues to be decisive for the economic life and union movement."<sup>772</sup> The Communists admitted their failure bluntly by writing that "a serious deficit of the whole party work is the completely insufficient representation of the party in the work place."<sup>773</sup> The NSBO did even worse (see Table 19).

**Table 19:** Factory council election results in Saxony in 1931 (gains or losses compared with 1930 in brackets)

sector/ town	work- force	Free trade unions	RGO	NSBO	Nationalists
Mining	18,160	73.0 (-9.5)	23.7 (+7.1)	0.8 (+0.8)	1.7 (+1.7)
Metal:					
-Leipzig	11,100	70.0 (-5.5)	8.0 (+2.9)	0.3 (+0.3)	0.3 (+0.1)
-Dresden	8,300	84.4 (-1.3)	14.4 (+0.5)	- -	- -
Textile:					
-Chemnitz	51,458	74.0 (-3.8)	10.8 (+1.4)	1.8 (+1.2)	3.9 (-0.1)
-Zittau	17,285	84.7 (-3.3)	2.9 (+2.3)	0.2 (+0.2)	0.2 (+0.2)

Source: H. A. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republic 1930-1933* (Bonn, 1990), Anhang.

In early 1932 the Saxon Nazis reported that "nearly 1,000 NSBO cells were created in the state in 1931."<sup>774</sup> Even taking this probably exaggerated figure as true, it would mean that there were

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<sup>771</sup> STA L, AH Döbeln, Nr. 2409, Jahresbericht 1931, p. 9.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid.

<sup>773</sup> 'Mängel, Fehler, Schwächen', *Der Bolschewik*, Nr. 10, September 1931.

<sup>774</sup> FK, Nr. 1, 2.1.1932.

only thirty-four Nazi cells in every 1,000 middle-sized and large-scale companies in Saxony. As hardly any elections to factory councils took place in 1932 due to government fear of political disturbances, it is difficult to assess the further development of the NSBO in Saxony until the Nazis' seized power in 1933. Some growth and success, especially in the south-western part of the province, must be assumed.<sup>775</sup> Mai argues that Saxony was one of the five most important regional NSBO strongholds in early 1933.<sup>776</sup> However, in large areas the NSBO did not even exist before 1932 or even 1933. After the 'seizure of power' NSBO officials from Bautzen commented on their experiences before 1931: "It was completely unrealistic to think about an organisational fusion, as there were only isolated party members in some few factories."<sup>777</sup> Only in spring 1932 was the first big cell founded.<sup>778</sup> In *Markneukirchen*, the first small town to bring the Nazis an overall majority in the 1920s, the NSBO was only founded on 15 February 1933 by a mere four party members.<sup>779</sup> As the town was dominated by small and medium scale industry it did not seem necessary to establish NSBO cells.

#### (vi) Nazis in Saxon working-class districts

While all the efforts by the Nazis to gain a foothold in the work place of the Saxon working classes made extremely slow progress,

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<sup>775</sup> C. J. Fischer, *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazism* (London, 1991), Chapter 9.

<sup>776</sup> Together with Berlin, Westphalia-North, Silesia, and Cologne-Aachen (Mai 'NSBO', p. 596).

<sup>777</sup> *Zehn Jahre NSDAP, Ortsgruppe Bautzen*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>778</sup> Ibid.

<sup>779</sup> *NSDAP Markneukirchen*, p. 65.

they also also faced stiff resistance in their attempts to recruit followers in urban working-class districts. In 1926 the Nazis recorded that a "deep seated, or rather injected hatred, amongst the masses against Adolf Hitler and his National Socialism assumes an unparalleled form of fierceness" in Saxony.<sup>780</sup> It was so dangerous for the Nazis to show up in some working-class districts in Leipzig, that they did so very rarely. When on occasion they organised meetings in the 'red West' of Leipzig - a Marxist stronghold -, most of the meetings ended in wild brawls between the SA and Marxist activists. The police then usually closed the meeting and the Nazis had to leave again, highly frustrated.<sup>781</sup> The situation was similar in the town's southern districts<sup>782</sup>, and the local Nazis were often prevented from speaking a single word in public in Leipzig's working-class districts. During the September 1930 election campaign, the Nazis were brave to hold an election meeting in the town of Freital, the greatest SPD stronghold. This too ended in a violent brawl.<sup>783</sup> Even in Plauen, the stronghold and headquarters of the NSDAP in Saxony, the Nazis faced stiff resistance in their attempt to spread their ideas in solid working-class districts. The Nazis in Plauen specifically targeted factory and non-factory workers in their autumn campaign of 1931. It is noticeable that the campaign was directed at the 'homes' rather than the work-place of the working class. This seemed to promise greater success for the local Nazis. The strengthening of the NSBO as a specific target was not mentioned at all. The Nazis in Plauen explained: "The hand and factory worker is ... as indispensable as

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<sup>780</sup> 'Adolf Hitler und das rote Sachsen', *NSFS*, Nr. 15, 13.6.1926.

<sup>781</sup> E.g. see *FK*, Nr. 79, 1.11.1930.

<sup>782</sup> E.g. see *ibid.*, Nr. 105, 3.12.1930.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 31, 5.9.1930.

any other working group ... in the Third Reich! Because of this we also carry the swastika banner into the red town districts ... Therefore we are issuing the slogan: forward also into the working-class districts!"<sup>784</sup> The task was expected to be a hard physical battle which could only be started after a "mobilization of all National Socialists of Plauen, uniting all party members and supporters fit for military service ... to wake up the many *Volksgenossen* who are still so far away from us."<sup>785</sup>

*Der Freiheitskampf* reported one attempt: "This time it went through Haselbrunn. There was amazement amongst the extremely 'red residents' of the *Lange-* and *Herderstraße* (well known specialists in the building of barricades) ... naturally they were everything but fascinated ... as we came so unexpectedly they could not demonstrate their skill in building street barricades and limited themselves to throwing beer bottles ... (and) the usual shouting of "Red Front" and "Down! Down! Down!"<sup>786</sup> Three months before Hitler was appointed Chancellor the Nazis reported a similar account from "red Pieschen", one of the working-class districts in Dresden: "The fight in our district is incredibly hard. Marxism defends it as its sole domain. SA members who walk home alone are attacked; party members, as soon as they are known as such, are watched every step they make; their family members are harrassed, even children suffer due to the terror from the red comrades; business people are boycotted ... the pack does not even shrink back from attacks in apartments."<sup>787</sup> Overall the Nazis did worst and faced enormously stiff resistance in large working-class

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<sup>784</sup> Ibid., Nr. 227, 29.9.1931.

<sup>785</sup> Ibid.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid., Nr. 228, 30.9.1931.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid., Nr. 242, 14.10.1932.

districts with a traditional support for the Marxist parties, i.e. in places where a socialist milieu existed.

However, the Nazis' relentless and flexible efforts to gain a foothold even in the most solid Marxist strongholds, helped to dilute and break down strong resistance in some places. Even in purely working-class districts the Nazis were able to gain votes during elections. To be sure, workers could hardly show their sympathies for the Nazis openly due to the pressure exerted on them by their environment. They rather chose to vote quietly for the NSDAP in secret parliamentary ballots. Nazis from Belgershain, near Leipzig, reported about the "solid" position of the SPD in their village and explained: "Its backbone was the local Social Democratic Party organisation with thirty members. At its side was a red gymnastic club with fifty members and a workers singing club with thirty members ... The discipline of the workers who were organised in ... these Marxist organisations was so good, that the NSDAP did not manage to attract these workers to its meetings. However, it is beyond doubt, that a good part of them had voted for the NSDAP, who already scored an absolute majority in the elections in July 1932."<sup>788</sup> Furthermore, a purely proletarian housing estate was not necessarily a guarantee of solid support for the Marxist parties. Even during tranquil times workers voted for bourgeois parties. The SPD in Chemnitz reported: "It is an unpleasant phenomenon, that we do not have outright success in proletarian districts, which ought to be ours."<sup>789</sup> They illustrated this with the housing estate 'Chemnitz-Gablenz', which only had 404 party members among the 1,984 residents eligible to vote. To the disappointment of the SPD

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<sup>788</sup> Geschichte der Ortsgruppe Belgershain (Belgershain, 1934).

<sup>789</sup> 'Chemnitz Erzgebirge auf dem Vormarsch!', *ChVSt*, Nr. 29, 4.2.1929.

261 residents voted for bourgeois parties in the May 1928 *Reichstag* elections.<sup>790</sup>

The Nazis were extremely flexible in adopting propaganda methods in working-class districts according to the local situation. In places where they faced overwhelming resistance, the Nazis normally avoided outright confrontation. As parades or public meetings in the west of Leipzig only fueled tough resistance from Marxist activists, they preferred to be active 'underneath the surface' in several local party branches and a women's group.<sup>791</sup> In working-class districts, where resistance against Nazi infiltration was not so organised and tenacious, the Nazis were much more prepared to use violence to conquer new terrain. In Chemnitz, where in addition large sections of the police sympathized with their cause, the Nazis wore down Marxist activists in a brutal battle over the control of the streets by the end of 1931.<sup>792</sup> The exceptionally brutal confrontations between Nazis and KPD and SPD activists became evident in the enormous extent of violence which spread through Saxony in the last years of the Republic.<sup>793</sup> The KPD in particular "was highly prepared to use violence in order to prevent the infiltration of Nazis into working-class districts."<sup>794</sup>

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<sup>790</sup> Ibid.

<sup>791</sup> *LVZ*, Nr. 194, 22.8.1931; *ibid.*, Nr. 6, 8.1.1932

<sup>792</sup> E.g. see *ChVSt*, Nr. 197, 25.8.1931.

<sup>793</sup> A statistic published in the *VB* shows that according to Nazi records forty-eight out of 129 violent attacks against National Socialists in the *Reich* took place alone in Saxony between 8 March and 25 April 1931 (*VB*, Nr. 130/31, 10/11.5.1931).

<sup>794</sup> *STA D*, KH Dresden, Nr. 262, Juni 1930.

(vii) Nazi success among Saxon workers

We have seen the limited success of the Saxon Nazis in establishing widespread support for the NSBO, and their apparent problems in infiltrating large working-class districts. Despite this, the Nazis were still able to mobilize a significant working-class membership and voting support in Saxony. In Chemnitz, the Nazis claimed that thirty out of 100 party members came from the working class.<sup>795</sup> Even in the Marxist stronghold of Leipzig, the SPD observed a "quite considerable number of workers" amongst a Nazi parade through the town in 1932.<sup>796</sup> As the Nazis own membership figures in Saxony, as in other parts of Germany, seem to underestimate the working-class presence by about 10 per cent, it seems likely that about 40 per cent of the Saxon NSDAP membership came from the working class in autumn 1930 and probably even more by early 1933.<sup>797</sup> Additionally, the latest research by Jürgen Falter shows that up to 40 per cent of the NSDAP vote came from the working class in the last elections of the Weimar Republic.<sup>798</sup> The figures for Saxony were similar, if not higher. Already after the provincial election in June 1930 the Nazis rejoiced: "Particularly gratifying is the enormous success of the National Socialists in purely working-

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<sup>795</sup> *FK*, Nr. 88, 16.4.1931.

<sup>796</sup> 'Der Nazi-Aufmarsch - Eine Pleite', *LVZ*, Nr. 10, 13.1.1932.

<sup>797</sup> According to the NSDAP statistic from 1935, 29.2 per cent of NSDAP members came from the working class in the region before 14 September 1930, and 35 per cent before 30 January 1933. Detlev Mühlberger has shown, that the NSDAP statistic for 1930 underestimated the working-class presence by about 10 per cent (13.3 per cent in the *Gau* Württemberg and 6.5 per cent in the *Gau* South-Hannover-Brunswick). Mühlberger explains: "The Nazi Party did mobilize considerable lower-class support by 1930, but found it much more difficult to retain it over time, giving rise to a significant understatement in the *Partei-Statistik* of the worker element active in the party" (Mühlberger, *Hitler's followers*, p. 82). Bennecke estimates that 60 per cent of the SA members came from the working class in the KHS Leipzig and Dresden (Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 25).

<sup>798</sup> Falter, *Hitlers Wähler*, pp. 225, 371.



class areas."<sup>799</sup> This referred to their stunning gains in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland, a solid working-class area. The Communists suggested the following diagnosis: " A great part of the National Socialist vote is recruited from the proletariat ... Especially in the Vogtland a number of our voters definitely switched over to the fascists."<sup>800</sup> The Communists admitted how "bad" the performance of the traditional working-class parties had been in the southwestern corner of Saxony and compared the September 1930 with the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections: "The SPD has lost (support) in the Vogtland to a greater extent than in any other district. We did not profit from this but lost too."<sup>801</sup> Some areas of working-class Saxony had become Nazi strongholds.

The electoral district of Chemnitz/Zwickau became the second best Nazi electoral district with 43.4 per cent of the vote in the November 1932 *Reichstag* elections. From the 49 regional districts of Saxony, 40 were above the average result of 37.3 per cent of the vote for the NSDAP in the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections. In nine districts the Nazis even won more than 50 per cent of the vote (see Table 15). In the highly industrialised AH Auerbach (68.8 per cent of the workforce was employed in industry) the NSDAP received 57.9 per cent of the vote in the elections in July 1932, and in the similarly industrialised town of Werdau (67.5 per cent of the workforce was employed in industry) the party won 53.3 per cent of the vote. In the thirty-four electoral districts in Saxony in which more than 50 per cent of the working population were employed in

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<sup>799</sup> VB, Nr. 151, 27.6.1930.

<sup>800</sup> *Der Bolschewik*, Nr. 7, August 1930.

<sup>801</sup> 'Die Wahlergebnisse in Sachsen', *ibid.*, Nr. 14, August 1932.

industry (between 50 and 77.7 per cent), the Nazis scored an average of 42.7 per cent of the vote.

The Nazis did particularly well in attracting working-class support in small scale, medium scale and cottage industries in the 'industrial villages' of the Erzgebirge/Vogtland. Eight out of nine election districts where the NSDAP scored the absolute majority in July 1932, came from this area. Seven of them were extremely industrialised, rural districts, and the remaining two were the towns of Werdau and Plauen. The villages of Pillmansgrün and Kottengrün in the AH Auerbach are good examples to illustrate the collapse of the SPD support in the area throughout the fourteen years of the Republic and the rapid rise of the NSDAP at the end of the 1920s. Most of the 831 citizens worked in the textile industry and produced embroidery at home. At the beginning of the Republic both villages were solidly voting SPD. The SPD gained 73.4 per cent of the vote in the 1919 *Reichstag* elections. This fell to 45.2 per cent in the elections in 1920. By 1930, the SPD vote had completely collapsed, as only a mere five citizens voted for the party (3.8%) in the June state elections. The Communists gained 11.3 per cent and the Nazis were close to an absolute majority with 46.6 per cent. Complete triumph came for the Nazis only two years later in the July 1932 elections, when they received 79.5 per cent of the vote. The combined vote of the left was reduced to 15.8 per cent (5% for SPD). The roughly 80,000 workers in cottage industries in Saxony were a good example of how the SPD drove some members of the working class virtually into the hands of the Nazis. The SPD sympathised with the extremely miserable situation of the cottage workers, but at the same time welcomed the rationalisation which would sooner or later destroy this profession

as a natural step towards the concentration of industries.<sup>802</sup> The Nazis, on the other hand, offered them an honourable existence, emphasised the values of *Volkstum* and promised welfare through the creation of a 'national community'.

The Nazis were also very successful in urban areas. The NSDAP scored more votes in the very industrialised towns of Werdau, Plauen, Glauchau, Aue, and Chemnitz than at the *Reich* level in July 1932. Table 20 shows that the Nazis did not only win over votes from the Marxist parties in the rural areas, but also managed to do

**Table 20:** Losses and wins of votes for SPD, KPD and NSDAP between the September 1930 and July 1933 *Reichstag* elections

	SPD	KPD	NSDAP
Aue	-223	+454	+2,850
AH Auerbach	-5,700	-951	+26,254
Chemnitz	-6,425	+4,331	+39,334
Dresden	-2,162	-2,919	+76,822
Freiberg	- 296	+114	+5,985
Glauchau	-1,061	+981	+4,930
AH Plauen	-4,482	+270	+12,119
Plauen	-1,343	-887	+12,456
Reichenbach	-1,151	+26	+4,281
Werdau	- 401	+179	+2,329

Source: *StDR*, (1930-1932).

so in urban areas. These were towns where the SPD - as in those rural areas where the Nazis did so well in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland - had lost enormous voting support throughout the Weimar era, but particularly after 1928. In no other town did the SPD lose more votes between 1928 and 1932, than in Glauchau and Meerane (17.4%/15.2%) (see Table 21 below). Local SPD officials reported that their members suffered badly due to the depression of the

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<sup>802</sup> E.g. see the article 'Sterbende Heimarbeit', *ChVSt*, Nr. 57, 8.3.1930.

**Table 21: Percentage of loss for the SPD in administrative district in Saxony between the Mai 1928 and July 1932 *Reichstag* elections**

20.5	AH Plauen	10.7	AH Stollberg	6.1	Dresden
19.8	AH Auerbach	10.0	AH Kamenz	5.8	Freiberg
19.1	AH Zwickau	9.8	AH Flöha	5.8	Freital
17.4	Glauchau	9.7	AH Pirna	5	Meißen
16.4	AH Löbau	9.5	Reichenbach	4.7	Chemnitz
15.2	Meerane	9.4	AH Rochlitz	4.5	Pirna
14.7	AH Schwarzenberg	9.3	Aue	4.1	Döbeln
14.3	AH Zittau	8.7	Zwickau	3.7	AH Borna
13.0	AH Werdau	8.7	AH Dippoldiswalde	3.6	Leipzig
12.4	Crimmitschau	8.4	St. Plauen	3.5	AH Großenhain
12.4	Werdau	<b>8.2</b>	<b>REICH</b>	3.5	AH Meißen
12.3	AH Bautzen	7.2	Mittweida	3.5	AH Grimma
12.2	AH Marienberg	7.1	AH Oelsnitz	2.7	AH Döbeln
11.6	Zittau	7.1	Bautzen	2.6	AH Oschatz
10.9	AH Annaberg	7.1	Wurzen	2.2	AH Leipzig
10.9	AH Freiberg	7.0	AH Chemnitz	1.7	Riesa
10.7	AH Glauchau	6.7	AH Dresden		

Source: calculated from *StDR*, (1928, 1932).

textile industry in both towns.<sup>803</sup> By 1932, they had become solid territory for the Nazis (43.4%/39.6%) and bastions for the Communists (24%/24%) (see Table 22 below).

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<sup>803</sup> *SPD Chemnitz/Erzgebirge 1930*, pp. 15-16.

**Table 22: Percentage of votes in descending order for NSDAP, SPD and KPD in Saxony's administrative districts in the July *Reichstag* elections**

NSDAP	SPD	KPD
57.9 AH Auerbach	46.1 Meißen	27.5 AH Chemnitz
57.5 AH Oelsnitz	43.8 Freital	26.4 Pirna
56.2 AH Plauen	41.9 Riesa	24.6 Freital
54.4 AH Marienberg	36.1 AH Döbeln	24.6 AH Leipzig
53.7 AH Freiberg	36.0 AH Meißen	24.0 Glauchau
53.3 Werdau	35.7 AH Oschatz	24.0 Meerane
52.5 AH Annaberg	35.2 Mittweida	22.0 Aue
50.7 Plauen	35.2 Wurzen	21.5 Plauen
50.1 AH Dippoldiswalde	34.8 AH Dresden	21.5 AH Pirna
49.7 Freiberg	34.3 AH Leipzig	21.4 AH Zittau
49.6 AH Werdau	34.1 Döbeln	21.2 Chemnitz
49.0 AH Schwarzenberg	34.1 Leipzig	21.2 AH Glauchau
47.9 AH Flöha	33.5 AH Großenhain	20.8 AH Rochlitz
46.6 AH Großenhain	33.3 Dresden	20.5 AH Schwarzenberg
45.9 AH Glauchau	32.6 Crimmitschau	20.3 Leipzig
45.0 AH Stollberg	30.1 AH Borna	19.3 AH Flöha
44.9 AH Rochlitz	30.0 AH Grimma	19.1 AH Auerbach
44.7 AH Döbeln	29.6 AH Zwickau	19.0 AH Stollberg
43.5 AH Meißen	29.0 AH Freiberg	18.4 AH Oelsnitz
43.4 Glauchau	28.5 Reichenbach	17.7 AH Marienberg
43.4 Zwickau	28.3 AH Stollberg	17.6 AH Löbau
43.3 Aue	28.3 Zwickau	17.4 AH Borna
42.9 AH Oschatz	28.2 Freiberg	16.9 AH Bautzen
42.3 AH Grimma	28.1 AH Kamenz	16.9 Döbeln
42.0 Bautzen	27.1 Chemnitz	16.2 AH Grimma
41.9 Chemnitz	26.4 AH Pirna	16.1 Werdau
41.9 AH Kamenz	26.2 Glauchau	15.9 AH Annaberg
41.8 Crimmitschau	26.0 AH Zittau	15.5 AH Werdau
41.1 AH Bautzen	25.9 Meerane	15.4 Wurzen
40.9 Mittweida	25.0 AH Dippoldiswalde	15.3 AH Dresden
40.6 AH Chemnitz	24.8 AH Werdau	15.0 Reichenbach
40.6 AH Zwickau	24.5 AH Löbau	14.4 Zwickau
40.2 AH Borna	24.4 Bautzen	<b>14.3 Reich</b>
39.6 Meerane	24.3 AH Glauchau	13.9 AH Plauen
39.6 Zittau	24.2 Pirna	13.7 Dresden
39.3 AH Pirna	24.1 AH Rochlitz	13.7 Zittau
38.7 Reichenbach	23.1 AH Flöha	13.5 Crimmitschau
38.7 AH Löbau	23.1 AH Bautzen	12.3 Riesa
38.5 Wurzen	22.6 AH Chemnitz	11.7 AH Dippoldiswalde
37.7 Dresden	22.5 Zittau	11.6 AH Zwickau
<b>37.3 Reich</b>	22.3 AH Annaberg	11.4 Bautzen
37.2 Döbeln	<b>21.6 Reich</b>	11.0 AH Kamenz
36.3 AH Dresden	20.3 AH Marienberg	10.2 AH Döbeln
33.5 Pirna	20.2 Aue	9.6 Mittweida
32.9 AH Zittau	20.0 Werdau	9.6 AH Oschatz
32.6 Meißen	16.6 AH Schwarzenberg	9.1 AH Freiberg
32.3 Leipzig	15.8 Plauen	8.7 Meißen
31.1 Riesa	14.9 AH Plauen	7.8 Freiberg
30.0 AH Leipzig	12.2 AH Oelsnitz	7.8 AH Meißen
21.6 Freital	10.6 AH Auerbach	6.6 AH Großenhain

Source: calculated from *StDR*, (1932).

#### (viii) Conclusion

The Nazis found extremely favourable conditions to attract mass support amongst the working class in the south-west of Saxony. The local Social Democratic party and organisational network was not widespread, sophisticated, dedicated, determined and united enough to ward off and respond successfully to the enormous challenges posed by the Nazis and the disastrous economic crisis. Specific regional interests, the isolation in the valleys, and the predominance of small, medium scale and cottage industries, prevented the growth of working-class milieus, which would have been able to withstand Nazi infiltration. In contrast to the stable SPD districts of Leipzig and Dresden, the Nazis were able to 'overrun' and absorb large parts of former SPD supporters in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland. In 1931 it was reported from the AH Schwarzenberg: "The SPD seem to be on the way to extinction. Apparently the party is continuously losing party members, who join the NSDAP, KPD or the newly formed SAP."<sup>804</sup> The local Social Democrats appeared stagnant and helpless, while the Nazis were active, dynamic and thriving. The Communists reported at the end of 1930 that the workers' support for the NSDAP was particularly strong in regions, "where there is a numerous, impoverished working class (cottage, small and medium scale industry) and where old social democratic traditions still exist."<sup>805</sup> Additionally, the poor distribution of the SPD press in rural areas, allowed the strong bourgeois press, which increasingly sympathised with the

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<sup>804</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1943, Dezember 1931.

<sup>805</sup> Staatsarchiv Bremen (SB), Polizei-Direktion Bremen (Rep. 4,65)/253/47. Aus Mitteilungen Nr. 21 des Polizei Präsidenten Berlin, 1. November 1930. N. Stelle Nr. 2762/30 geh. v. 7.11.30.II. Linksradikale Bewegung. Quoted from C. J. Fischer, 'Gab es am Ende der Weimarer Republik einen Marxistischen Wählerblock?', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 21 (1) (1995), p. 65.

Nazis, to exert a quasi-monopoly over public opinion. SPD officials in the Erzgebirge summed this up with resignation: "We will only be able to make any progress when we have removed the bourgeois newspapers from working-class houses."<sup>806</sup>

In mid-1929, a Social Democratic union official blamed the terrible economic situation in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland for the loss of his party amongst the local working class: "There was enough work in the musical instrument- and *Posamenten* industry in the Vogtland/Erzgebirge until 1912. However, this changed after the war. A complete shift in demand and taste set in. The demand for beadwork and laces decreased, and the zither, the accordion and other musical instruments were replaced by gramophones and radios. These changes took the income from thousands of formerly secure existences. These people had run into the arms of the first prophet that came along. This explains, why ten years ago Max Hölz, and more recently Hitler, found conditions so favourable."<sup>807</sup>

People who needed the SPD most, those who lived in miserable conditions in the valleys of south-west Saxony, found it more difficult to find help from the SPD's welfare association, than in other parts of the region. Whereas there was a local branch of the Workers' Welfare Association in almost every tenth village in the district of Leipzig, there was only one branch in every fourteenth village in the district of Zwickau.<sup>808</sup> Overall, there were only ten places where SPD women sewed clothes for the poor in the 423 villages and towns of the KH Zwickau.<sup>809</sup>

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<sup>806</sup> See 'Der Wahlausgang im oberen Erzgebirge', *ChVSt*, Nr. 272, 23.11.1929.

<sup>807</sup> See 'Versammlung der Zwickauer Betriebsräte', *SVB*, Nr. 165, 18.7.1929.

<sup>808</sup> See 'Die Arbeiterwohlfahrt', *LVZ*, 28.5.1932; and 'Arbeiterwohlfahrt im Bezirk Zwickau/Plauen', *SVB*, Nr. 30, 5.2.1932, .

<sup>809</sup> *Ibid.*

The Social Democrats in Meißen, Freital, Riesa, Döbeln and Leipzig proved that a deep-rooted and sophisticated organisational network enabled them to mobilize their support even when they were hit by similarly grave economic effects and vigorous Nazi activities as in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland (also see the chapter 'Key Study' and tables). The feeling of direction, strength and determination, which the SPD in Leipzig displayed through activities and mass meetings, was completely lacking in Zwickau/Plauen.<sup>810</sup> However, even areas where a working-class milieu had developed were not completely immune to Nazi success in secret ballots.

Many of the voters who had voted for the SPD at the beginning of the Republic, were already firmly on the way to supporting conservative and even anti-democratic forces by the early 1920s. There were only a handful of places in the whole KH Zwickau, in which Hindenburg did not receive the overall majority in the presidential elections of 1925. The Nazis themselves analysed this drift to the right well at the end of 1931: "The belief in the *Reich*, more specifically in the government, was eroded in the years after the November revolution amongst the people of the Erzgebirge. They too had heard the promises which were made at that time and had followed developments with distrust, suspicious as to what the outcome might be. Yes, the people from the Erzgebirge even followed the call to vote for one of the many bourgeois splinter

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<sup>810</sup> See the impressive party meeting in Leipzig to celebrate the thirteenth anniversary of the constitution ('Wir glauben an der Freiheit Sieg', LVZ, Nr. 188, 12.8.1932), or the series of powerful *Eiserne Front* meetings against Hitler and Schleicher in Leipzig ('Machtvolle Kundgebung der Eisernen Front', *ibid.*, 10.9.1932), or the mass demonstration of 25,000 people for freedom and against dictatorship in February 1933 ('Aufmarsch der Freiheitsfront in Leipzig', *ibid.*, Nr. 37, 13.2.1933).



parties and many even followed the Marxists, because their agitators made most promises. Year after year the *Erzgebirgler* waited in vain for the promises of the various parties to be fulfilled. However, they sensed with their own ears and eyes that things increasingly got worse. Word spread quickly that another farmer or business man had reached the end of his strength, and people became alarmed that there were more and more businesses collapsing under the burden of taxes and interest rates. One could see the army of the unemployed with one's own eyes. There was no need to read newspapers to be informed about the misery of our *Volk*."<sup>811</sup>

The SPD was mainly blamed for the misery as it had taken over government responsibility after the First World War. Simultaneously, it had lost its function as rallying point for all opposition views. The Nazis had something unique to offer for all sectors of Saxon society: The creation of a strong nation and a *Volksgemeinschaft* to overcome the divisions of the society. This appeal, which centred around extreme nationalism<sup>812</sup>, also attracted large sectors among the working classes: It offered a *Heimat* to those who were uprooted, unorganised and not affiliated to organisations or parties. The SPD was aware of this and concentrated their efforts before elections to win these "indifferent masses, who are workers, but nevertheless stand in the bourgeois camp."<sup>813</sup>

The SPD's efforts, however, were not rewarded with success. A considerable part of the working class began to support the Nazis

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<sup>811</sup> FK, Nr. 250, 6.11.1931.

<sup>812</sup> Also see the chapter 'Nationalist Milieu' and 'Key Study'.

<sup>813</sup> See 'Und nun in den Wahlkampf', SVB, Nr. 87, 15.4.1929.

when they were not firmly embedded in a working-class milieu and their traditional parties did not respond to these deep rooted nationalist desires for a strong nation and a *Volksgemeinschaft*, which came out into the open during the crisis. Even before the First World War, patriotic, militarist and xenophobic tendencies had emerged in traditional SPD bastions like the city of Chemnitz.<sup>814</sup> In the late 1920s local KPD organisations experienced the impact of working-class nationalism during the NSDAP's and DNVP's anti-Young Plan campaign, to which it seemed that their own party offered no positive solution.<sup>815</sup> Again and again, Saxon Nazis emphasized the comradeship, which "overcame all class differences" and "bound them together beyond the grave" during the *Kampfzeit*.<sup>816</sup> Nazis from Bautzen aimed at "the restoration of a strong and united *Volk*" and at "moving forward, towards a nation in which everyone enjoys honour, freedom and justice."<sup>817</sup>

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<sup>814</sup> Fischer, *German Communists*, p. 24.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>816</sup> Lang, 'NSDAP Annaberg', pp. 228-229.

<sup>817</sup> NSDAP Bautzen, p. 49.

## 11. The Rise of the Nazis in the Nationalist Milieu of Saxony

### (i) Introduction

The national right was united by its rejection of the democratic system and its support for an authoritarian state in which outstanding leaders would rise above the masses. Central to its political belief was the fight against the Marxist working-class movement and the peace of Versailles, which was regarded as a national disgrace.<sup>818</sup> The national right tried to unite the black-white-red front against the 'Weimar Coalition', which was seen as a left-wing front supporting the Republic.<sup>819</sup> However, the anti-democratic right was organisationally divided and hampered by internal conflicts during the Weimar era. When the NSDAP made astonishing gains in the September 1930 *Reichstag* elections, it became clear that the party under the leadership of Hitler had legitimate prospects of leading Germany out of the Weimar 'swamp' into a new future.<sup>820</sup> Anyone who wished to see the victory of the national movement over the Republic, could only welcome the political success of the Nazi Party.<sup>821</sup> A decisive factor in the support of the national right for the NSDAP was the lack of any alternative way of getting rid of the Republic. Furthermore, the national right hoped to incorporate National Socialism into its

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<sup>818</sup> K. Reimus, "'Das Reich muß uns doch bleiben!'" Die nationale Rechte', in D. Lehnert and K. Megerle (Hrsg.), *Politische Identität und nationale Gedenktage. Zur politischen Kultur in der Weimarer Republik* (Opladen, 1989), p. 231.

<sup>819</sup> Reimus, 'Rechte', pp. 237 ff.

<sup>820</sup> K. Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933* (München, 1962), pp. 357-358.

<sup>821</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

rebuilding of society.<sup>822</sup> Many Germans supported the Nazis not only as a result of economic hardships, or the appealing features of the NSDAP (appearance, programme, charisma of Hitler), but also because the party had become the rallying point of the 'away from Weimar' movement.<sup>823</sup>

Anti-democratic ideology developed in a powerful way during the Weimar era because it was supported by traditional ruling elites in industry, the administration and the army, many bourgeois clubs, the press, the church, the schools, and universities.<sup>824</sup> In part one we discussed the evolution of the local Nazi Party from the *völkisch* milieu after the First World War. This chapter looks at the powerful nationalist, anti-democratic milieu in Saxon society which was firmly embedded in bourgeois circles and provided an essential breeding ground for the rapid rise of the local Nazis from the late 1920s onwards. The nationalist milieu undermined the republican system and prepared the ground for a new nationalist state, which was eventually realised in the National Socialist '*Führerstaat*' ('leader state').

## (ii) Bourgeois clubs and organisations in Saxony

The development of modern clubs was linked with the emergence of bourgeois industrial society at the beginning of the nineteenth

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<sup>822</sup> For an introductory survey see J. Noakes, 'German Conservatives and the Third Reich: an ambiguous relationship', in M. Blinkhorn (ed.), *Fascists and Conservatives: The Racial Right and the Establishment in Twentieth Century Europe* (London, 1990), pp. 71-97.

<sup>823</sup> Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, pp. 375-376.

<sup>824</sup> Also see H. A. Winkler, *Mittelstand, Demokratie und Nationalsozialismus. Die politische Entwicklung von Handwerk und Kleinhandel in der Weimarer Republik* (Köln, 1972), p. 181.

century.<sup>825</sup> The vast number of clubs and their influence not only at a local, but also national level, ensured them a powerful position in German society. Clubs developed along class divisions in society, were an instrument of social control, and were often used to put forward the particular interest of their members.<sup>826</sup> Clubs formed primarily for leisure or social activities often had a political function too, particularly in local politics.<sup>827</sup> Voluntarily created clubs were dominated by the upper and middle classes in Germany.<sup>828</sup> The development of working class clubs in the last quarter of the nineteenth century created an 'alternative' organisational network to the existing bourgeois one. However, bourgeois clubs continued to dominate society particularly in rural areas and in small and medium sized towns.

Clubs were extremely widespread and attracted a large membership. The middle sized town Annaberg/Erzgebirge, with 19,818 citizens, had 249 clubs alone.<sup>829</sup> There were 343 clubs with 21,559 members in the forty-six villages and small towns in the AH Marienberg/Erzgebirge in the early 1920s.<sup>830</sup> This meant that roughly one in three citizens was a member of a club and that there were about thirteen clubs in every village/town in the district. The largest organisations were military clubs (thirty-eight clubs with 3,563 members), sports clubs (mainly gymnastic clubs;

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<sup>825</sup> See H.-J. Siewert, 'Zur Thematisierung des Vereinswesens in der deutschen Soziologie', in O. Dann (Hrsg.), *Vereinswesen und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland. Historische Zeitschrift* (Beiheft 9) (München, 1984), p. 154.

<sup>826</sup> K. Tenfelde, 'Die Entfaltung des Vereinswesens während der Industriellen Revolution in Deutschland (1850-1873)', in Dann, *Vereinswesen*, pp. 98, 114, 112. Also see Siewert, 'Vereinswesen'.

<sup>827</sup> Tenfelde, 'Vereinswesen', p. 96.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>829</sup> *Adreßbuch der Städte Annaberg, Buchholz und des Obererzgebirges 1928.*

<sup>830</sup> For this see STA D, AH Marienberg, Nr. 2207.

44/3,146), women's clubs (33/1,983), choral societies (31/1,338), agricultural associations, rifle clubs, *Heimat* clubs, voluntary fire brigades, societies for the ill, and artisan associations. Most of these organisations, which were mainly founded after 1860, were bourgeois clubs. The number of working-class clubs was comparatively small (mainly sports clubs and choral societies). There were only six SPD branches with 264 members (founded between 1909 and 1919) in the whole district.

Research about bourgeois clubs and their role in Weimar society remains scarce. However, a few studies have investigated the role of bourgeois clubs in the collapse of the Republic and the rise of the Nazi Party.<sup>831</sup> This section concentrates on the extreme nationalist, anti-Republican and military rhetoric of bourgeois clubs and organisations.<sup>832</sup>

A random survey of reports (*Mitteilungen*) of bourgeois clubs and organisations in Saxony between 1927 and 1933 showed their extreme nationalist and anti-republican sympathies.<sup>833</sup> Of twenty-eight *Mitteilungen*, twenty-six could be classified as

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<sup>831</sup> H. Mommsen, 'The Decline of the Bürgertum in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Germany', in H. Mommsen, *From Weimar To Auschwitz. Essays in German History* (Oxford, 1991); Koshar, *Marburg*; O. Heilbronner, 'Der verlassene Stammtisch. Vom Verfall der bürgerlichen Infrastruktur und dem Aufstieg der NSDAP am Beispiel der Region Schwarzwald', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 19 (2) (1993), pp. 178-201. Due to lack of sources the author was not able to discuss the disintegration of Saxon bourgeois clubs here.

<sup>832</sup> Also see W. Wette, 'Ideologien, Propaganda und Innenpolitik als Voraussetzungen der Kriegspolitik des Dritten Reiches', in W. Deist and M. Messerschmidt and H.-E. Volkmann and W. Wette (Hrsg.), *Ursachen und Voraussetzungen der deutschen Kriegspolitik* (Stuttgart, 1979), pp. 25-99.

<sup>833</sup> Heilbronner's observation that 'anti-Socialism' was the most important common feature of bourgeois club rhetoric could not be confirmed (Heilbronner, 'Stammtisch', pp. 183-184). The theme of 'anti-Socialism', however, featured heavily in the rhetoric of bourgeois newspapers (see the next section).

nationalist/extreme nationalist, and two as conservative.<sup>834</sup> All *Mitteilungen*, whether from professional or leisure clubs, featured nationalist or conservative ideas in some form. The *Landwirtschaftlicher Anzeiger für Sachsen und Thüringen* wanted "to save the German farmers abroad from extinction"<sup>835</sup>; the higher civil servants in Saxony announced in mid-1931: "We all want to believe that a historic hour is awaiting us at which a *Führertum* ends the tedious, corrupting material competition of the *Stände*"<sup>836</sup>; the Saxon draughtsmen described the 'devastating' impact of the 1918/19 revolution on education: "Complete neglect of technology and methods, unscrupulous application of cheap sources [workforce

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<sup>834</sup> Nationalist/extreme nationalist: *Deutsche Sängerbundszeitung*; *Die höhere Schule im Freistaat Sachsen. Zeitschrift des Sächsischen Philologenvereins*; *Landwirtschaftlicher Anzeiger für Sachsen und Thüringen*; *Leipziger Schützenzeitung. Monatliche Mitteilungen der Leipziger Schützengesellschaft*; *Mitteilungen der Familienforscher-Vereinigung Zwickau*; *Mitteilungen der Kameradschaftlichen Vereinigung ehemaliger Angehöriger des Reserve-Invanterie-Regiments 241, Ortsgruppe Dresden*; *Mitteilungen der Vereinigung Sächsischer Höherer Staatsbeamter e.V.*; *Mitteilungen des Chemnitzer Bezirksverein des V.D.J. und der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Betriebsingenieure im V.D.J. und E.V.*; *Mitteilungen des Landesverbandes Sächsischer Heimatschutz*; *Mitteilungen des Polizei Sport-Vereins 21 Leipzig (e.V.)*; *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Chemnitzer Geschichte*; *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Vogtländische Geschichte und Altertumskunde zu Plauen im Vogtland*; *Mitteilungen für die Kirchengemeinden Nieder- und Oberwürschnitz*; *Mitteilungen für Reichswehrrangehörige betreffend dem Besuch von Theater, Lichtspielen und sonstigen Unterhaltungsstätten in Standort Dresden*, *Mitteilungen Reichsvereinigung ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener e.V., Ortsgruppe Leipzig*; *Monatliche Mitteilungen des Allgemeinen Turnvereins Leipzig-Schleußig, e.V.*; *Monatliche Mitteilungen des Vereins für Kanusport Leipzig, e.V.*; *Monatliche Mitteilungen Schwimm-Klub Chemnitz von 1892 e.V.*; *Sachsen, Militär-Vereins-Kalender, Sächsische evangelisch-soziale Blätter*; *Sächsische Industrie. Organ des Verbandes Sächsischer Industrieller*; *Sächsische Landwirtschaftliche Zeitschrift. Amtsblatt der Landwirtschaftskammer für den Freistaat Sachsen*; *Sächsische Schützenzeitung*; *Sächsisches Militärvereinsblatt*; *Verein für Volkswohl, Leipzig*. Conservative: *Mitteilungen des Landesverbandes der christlichen Elternvereine Sachsens*; *Mitteilungen des sächsischen Landesverein für Zeichner*.

<sup>835</sup> *Landwirtschaftlicher Anzeiger für Sachsen und Thüringen*, Nr. 21, 24.3.1932.

<sup>836</sup> *Mitteilungen der Vereinigung Sächsischer Höherer Staatsbeamter e.V.*, Nr. 7/8, Juli/August 1931, p. 3.

and material]"<sup>837</sup>; in early 1932 the 'Association of Saxon Artisans' organised a state meeting under the motto: "Living-space for the artisans serves the self-preservation of the nation".<sup>838</sup> Bourgeois leisure organisations were extremely nationalist too. When the Saxon members of the 'German Gymnastics Association' organised a gymnastics meeting in June 1929, the participants used the occasion to demonstrate against Germany's war guilt.<sup>839</sup> The organ of the swimming club in Chemnitz (1892 e.V.) 'argued in spring 1932: "We must regard sport as a substitute for general military service ... We practice sport to be able to give the fatherland a strong and vital man who will be prepared to give his life for the *Heimat* one day."<sup>840</sup> In early 1931 the Chemnitz historians explained why the study of local history was important: "It is the strong root from which grows the love for the greater fatherland. The bond with the native soil should tie closer and closer; ... there should be more and more desire to get to know our *Heimat* ... The love for the *Heimat* ... will extend into a firm and deep-rooted tribal and national identity, to a German mind."<sup>841</sup> The organ for *Reichswehr* members in Dresden called on its readers to "get rid of the pacifist madness" and "if necessary to fight for German freedom with blood."<sup>842</sup> The article continued: "History is made by men, not

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<sup>837</sup> *Mitteilung des sächsischen Landesvereins für Zeichner*, Nr. 4, 1932, p. 227.

<sup>838</sup> See 'Handwerk in Not - Volk in Not!', *Dresdner Nachrichten*, Nr 193, 25.4.1932.

<sup>839</sup> *SB*, Nr. 26, 30.6.1929.

<sup>840</sup> *Monatliche Mitteilungen Schwimm-Club Chemnitz v. 1892 e.V.*, Nr. 4, April 1932.

<sup>841</sup> *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Chemnitzer Geschichte. Jahrbuch 1931-1932*, p. 9.

<sup>842</sup> *Mitteilungen für die Reichswehrangehörigen betreffend dem Besuch von Theatern, Lichtspielen und sonstigen Unterhaltungsstätten im Standort Dresden*, Dezember 1932.



by majority decisions, parties, ideologies and demagogues. Only the strong will of the conscientious, God-sent leader ... who rests on the divine power of the *Volkstum*, is able to lead a *Volk* from deep misery to ascent, and from slavery to strength."<sup>843</sup> The organ of Saxon rifle clubs advised all members in early 1932: "Hold out, because the last period of conflict for Germany's freedom has come ... This final fight can only be successful, when the German *Volk* is united on the soil of the German fatherland."<sup>844</sup> One of the rifle clubs' most important duties was to prepare the citizens militarily according to the slogan: "Train eye and hand for the fatherland."<sup>845</sup> In early 1931 the leadership of the '*Alldeutscher Verband*', *Gau Vogtland*, solemnly promised to "increase their contribution in the fight to overthrow the existing corrupt system and the preparation for the rebuilding of a *völkisch* state."<sup>846</sup>

Throughout the Weimar years there were serious strains between the Saxon state and the local Protestant church because the clergy resented progressive Saxon school laws, the local church tax policies, and liberal procedures to leave the church.<sup>847</sup> Additionally, many representatives of the church, whose opinion still exerted a strong influence over large sections of the population, particularly the middle classes, shared the enthusiasm for nationalist, sometimes even racial ideas. In their eyes the governments of the *Reich* or in Saxony were clearly not nationalist enough. In mid-1924 a priest from Kirchbach (AH Flöha) preached in a camp service at an annual meeting of the Saxon Military Association: "We

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<sup>843</sup> Ibid.

<sup>844</sup> *Sächsische Schützen-Zeitung*, Nr. 1, 1932, p. 2.

<sup>845</sup> Ibid.

<sup>846</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, Januar 1931.

<sup>847</sup> Lobmeier, 'Mittelschichten', p. 94.

demand a state which leads the *Volk* with power and strength and with a clear will."<sup>848</sup> The priest expressed his gratitude to the *völkisch* groups which had opened their eyes to the link with blood. He elaborated: "We agree with them, that it is decisive for Germany's ascent that the influx of alien blood is avoided."<sup>849</sup> Another priest complained in a speech to the Gymnastic Club Leipzig-Schleußig in mid-1932: "In the first years after the war some would have liked to erase the words war, *Kriegerverehrung* (the honouring of war heroes), and commemorations from the German language ... but the German *Volk* has a right to defend its honour and its *Heimat*."<sup>850</sup> He then went on to consecrate a new memorial: "I consecrate you, block of granite from the German past, to be a stone of memory and gratitude, to be a witness for heroism and love for the fatherland, to be a symbol for the willingness to make sacrifices and for loyalty."<sup>851</sup> The same gymnastic club carried mainly NSDAP's swastika flags at a march through Leipzig in late 1932.<sup>852</sup> Another local protestant church paper demanded in 1929: "We want Germans to feel German again, think German and act German."<sup>853</sup>

During election time the main aim of bourgeois organisations was to prevent a Marxist victory. Before early 1930 they only rarely expressed a preference for any bourgeois party in this task (compare the similarities with bourgeois newspapers in the discussion below). Before the May 1929 state elections the

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<sup>848</sup> *Sächsisches Militärvereinsblatt*, Nr. 14, 25.7.1924.

<sup>849</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>850</sup> *Monatliche Mitteilungen des Allgemeinen Turnvereins Leipzig-Schleußig e.V.*, Nr.7/8, Juli/August, 1932.

<sup>851</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>852</sup> *VdSL*, 5. Wp, 88. Sitzung, 18.10.1932, p. 3917.

<sup>853</sup> *Sächsisch evangelisch-soziale Blätter*, Nr. 20, 1929.

leadership of the Saxon crafts stated: "If you are clear where you belong, that you have to stand on the right if you do not want to help to dig your own grave, you easily recognise that the differences between the bourgeois parties are not very great ... the essential question is: vote and vote at all costs bourgeois! ... You know the meaning of a 'social economy'. Should the crafts become proletarian? Do you as a free and independent man want to become a mere number in this social economy?"

In the second half of the 1920s many professionals and bourgeois organisations became increasingly disillusioned with the bourgeois parties or other representatives they were traditionally allied with, and looked for help elsewhere.<sup>854</sup> When the crisis unfolded at the end of the 1920s, many of these middle class professionals and organisations became radicalized and moved closer to the NSDAP. Additionally, some were encouraged to support the Nazis when the NSDAP achieved spectacular election results, particularly in the September 1930 *Reichstag* elections. Before these elections the president of the 'Saxon Home and Land Owner Association', Kohlmann, regretted that in the past his association had orientated itself one-sidedly towards the middle-class parties. Kohlmann stated: "The home owners will be driven to despair by the bourgeois parties and many will turn to the radical parties if finally nothing is done to improve the situation of the home owners."<sup>855</sup>

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<sup>854</sup> E.g. Saxon professionals founded a working group for craft, trade and business in 1928 because they were dissatisfied with their traditional representatives (Lobmeier, 'Mittelschichten', p. 90). Also see L. E. Jones, 'The Dying Middle: Weimar Germany and the Fragmentation of Bourgeois Politics, *Central European History*, 5 (1972), pp. 23-54; P. Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism. Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (Oxford, New York, Toronto, 1990).

<sup>855</sup> *Grund und Hausbesitzerzeitung für Sachsen*, 15.9.1930 (quoted from Lobmeier, 'Mittelschichten', p. 91).

According to him, many home owners, particularly the youth, had already joined the NSDAP.<sup>856</sup> The organ of the higher civil servants in Saxony described the NSDAP sympathetically as "*Volkstümlich*" and "active" in November 1930, and proclaimed eight months later: "The NSDAP's educational programme stems from an emotional idealism which aims to create a politically strong Germany with the German citizen."<sup>857</sup> After the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections the same paper grieved that the NSDAP had not gained an absolute majority: "The experience with the German electorate proves that only clear statements, which are comprehensive even for the most simple voter, will create clear electoral decisions. It is true that the National Socialists' *Reichstag* faction with its 230 members is now larger than any other faction ever in the German *Reichstag*. However, the *Reichstag* has no majority of one party or of a group of similar parties."<sup>858</sup> From early 1932 onwards the organ of the Saxon philologists looked in a series of articles at the NSDAP's stance towards schools and complained about the lack of a coherent educational programme. In September that year, however, they praised a book about National Socialist education as "fruitful" and "stimulating" and predicted "a lasting value for this intellectual piece full of blood (*blutvoll*)."<sup>859</sup>

The single most powerful professional interest group in Saxony, the 'Association of Saxon Industrialists' (VSI), turned away from parliamentary democracy in the years of crisis and indirectly helped to prepare the ground for a new political system, i.e. the

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<sup>856</sup> Lobmeier, 'Mittelschichten', p. 91.

<sup>857</sup> *Mitteilungen der Vereinigung Sächsischer Höherer Staatsbeamter e.V.*, Nr. 11, November 1930; Nr. 7/8, Juli/August 1931.

<sup>858</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 9, September 1932.

<sup>859</sup> *Die höhere Schule im Freistaat Sachsen. Zeitschrift des Sächsischen Philologenvereins*, Nr. 13, 15.9.1932, pp. 213-214.

Nazi dictatorship.<sup>860</sup> Throughout the Weimar era the VSI used all its influence to prevent Marxist governments and to ensure that the conservative bourgeoisie was in charge of state affairs in Dresden. The VSI's anti-Zeigner campaign and its pressure on Berlin were decisive when the *Reich* overthrew the legal SPD-KPD coalition government in Saxony at the end of 1923<sup>861</sup>, and the organisation was one of the prime forces in uniting and rallying the bourgeois groups against the Marxist parties in election campaigns. When the growth of the NSDAP became apparent, the VSI examined in detail Mussolini's economic policies at the turn of 1929/1930. The VSI's organ, the weekly paper *Sächsische Industrie* (*SI*), printed among other things, a long speech on this subject given at the VSI's branch in Dresden. The speaker concluded: "It is impossible to suppress a certain admiration for this organically built economic theory, even if one has to recognize at the same time that it could not be put into practice without the backing of dictatorial powers."<sup>862</sup>

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<sup>860</sup> Overall, most historians have concentrated on the relationship between big business and/or agrarian elites and the Nazis (see especially H. A. Turner, *German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler* (New York, Oxford, 1985); H. Gies, 'NSDAP und landwirtschaftliche Organisationen in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 15 (4) (1967), pp. 341-376). The author agrees with Werner Bramke that there is a need to investigate the relationship between the Nazis and medium scale industrialists (in H. Winkler (Hrsg.), *Die deutsche Staatskrise 1930-1933: Handlungsspielräume und Alternativen* (München, 1992), p. 257). Gau Saxony was financially comparatively well off. This was due to a large income from membership dues, profits from meetings, but also due to donations from Saxon industrialists (Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 45; H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Hitler's Table Talk 1941-44. His Private Conversations* (London, 2nd. ed. 1973) p. 464). It is not clear to what extent Turner's claim, that smaller businessmen frequently supported the NSDAP financially, was true for Saxony (Turner, *Big Business*, pp. 343-344; Bramke's source is not clear: see Winkler, *Staatskrise*, p. 258).

<sup>861</sup> In spring 1929 the VSI wrote that "above all it was its interference" that caused the *Reichsexekution* and "prevented the dictatorship of the streets" in 1923 (*SI*, Nr. 14, 16.4.29, p. 317).

<sup>862</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 9, 1.3.1930, p. 195.

The cautious interest the VSI showed towards fascism was checked by the NSDAP's role in overthrowing the Büniger and Schieck governments which led to new elections in June 1930. More than anything else the Saxon industrialists feared instability and uncertainty. The VSI attacked the Saxon Nazis indirectly for causing "the most unnecessary of all election campaigns" and was unhappy with the election result because the new government would depend either on the NSDAP or the SPD. The VSI declared: "In both cases industry cannot hope for anything positive in the way of a quiet and continuing recovery."<sup>863</sup>

The VSI's increasing dissatisfaction with the whole system was shown by its mounting attacks on the social services (*SI*, Nr. 34, 23.8.1930, p. 771), its desire to become more involved in politics (*SI*, Nr. 35, 30.8.1930, p. 787), and its increasing propaganda against the reparation payments ('*Tributzahlungen*') (*SI*, Nr. 2, 10.1.1931). The VSI's language became more and more aggressive and nationalistic, and its attitude towards the national government increasingly distrustful. In spring 1931 the VSI's branch in Annaberg demanded a strengthening of Germany's military power and an end to any discussion of pacifist ideas. The local industrialists claimed that "Mussolini, the best current statesman", practised this fundamental principle.<sup>864</sup> The chairman of the VSI, Wittke, accused Brüning of breaking his promises and spoke of "twelve-years of government failures"<sup>865</sup>; and another member of the organisation said bluntly in a discussion: "We do not have confidence in the government!"<sup>866</sup>

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<sup>863</sup> Ibid., Nr. 26, 28.6.1930.

<sup>864</sup> Ibid., Nr. 16, 18.4.31, p. 270.

<sup>865</sup> Ibid., Nr. 27, 4.7.1931, p. 445.

<sup>866</sup> Ibid., Nr. 28, 11.7.1931, p. 458.

However, although the VSI allowed an economic expert of the NSDAP to speak in front of the organisation<sup>867</sup>, it did not support the Nazis. There were several reasons for this. First, there was concern about several aggressive features of the NSDAP; second, local industry depended on foreign markets - the NSDAP's emphasis on extreme nationalism thus only had a limited appeal. Finally, the Nazis' economic policies were based on emotions rather than professional analysis before early 1932.<sup>868</sup> However, the VSI too adopted a more emotional and nationalist language in the face of the desperate economic situation and some representatives openly demanded a change of the system. When all VSI districts summarized the bleak economic situation in their regions, the representative of the district of Zwickau stated: "We are not in a crisis, no, we struggle in the throes of death ... we cannot win this struggle to the death without regaining freedom (*Luft und Raum*) for our development at home and beyond the borders ... The system has to be changed."<sup>869</sup> The representative from the Vogtland declared: "The chains of the German economy kills the spirit of every progressive employer ... The German, and specifically *vogtländisch*', employer will do his best, but it is essential that he finally gains the necessary freedom to work."<sup>870</sup> At the VSI's annual meeting in March 1932, which adopted the motto "For loyalty and faith", a speaker described the German social insurance system as providing "a land of milk and honey"

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<sup>867</sup> Ibid., Nr. 2, 9.1.1932, p. 11. Already in June 1924 Gottfried Feder spoke about the current economic situation to about 150 Saxon industrialists in Chemnitz. He argued that the German *Volk* would completely depend on international capitalism if the Dawes plan would be ratified. (STA D, SÄStKa, Nr. 134, Bezirk Chemnitz, 16.6.1924).

<sup>868</sup> E.g. see *SI*, Nr. 2, 9.1.1932, p. 11.

<sup>869</sup> Ibid., Nr. 11, 12.3.1932, p. 113.

<sup>870</sup> Ibid., pp. 124-125.

and argued: "We long for a strong state leadership which will restore our respect and confidence in the state ... for the first time since the first war years, we notice a new 'Storm and Stress' (*'Sturm und Drang'*) among our youth, which wants to be young again, which is turning away from the intellectuals and the years without blood after the war and fights for new ideals ... There are signs that a new power in the *Volks* is emerging ... Is the undeniable destruction of our *völkisch* and economic life ... to continue, or will it be halted and lead to a new rallying (*Sammlung*)?"<sup>871</sup> Wittke expressed the helplessness of the VSI during a meeting of the VSI's branch in Annaberg and accepted any new system that got rid of the current one and promised improvement: "The precondition for every recovery remains that the economy is finally allowed again to follow its own laws, and every leader who restores this possibility for our economy, no matter where he comes from, is welcome."<sup>872</sup> Local industrialists announced during the same meeting: We will "no longer allow the fruits of honest and hard work ... to be destroyed."<sup>873</sup> The VSI openly withdrew its support for the democratic system a week before the November 1932 *Reichstag* elections, several months before Hitler was appointed Chancellor. Wittke emphasized that the new elections would underline the absurdity of parliament: "The employers have never really liked the modern form of government, the parliamentary system."<sup>874</sup> The VSI remained the most powerful extra-parliamentary pressure group and, unlike the

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<sup>871</sup> Ibid., Nr. 12, 19.3.1932, p. 162.

<sup>872</sup> Ibid., Nr. 17, 23.4.1932, p. 199.

<sup>873</sup> Ibid.

<sup>874</sup> Ibid., Nr. 44, 29.10.1932.



leaders of the Ruhr heavy industry<sup>875</sup>, did not voice active support for the NSDAP before Hitler's appointment as Chancellor.<sup>876</sup> However, its apparent helplessness in the face of the crisis and its gradual drift to the right helped to undermine the democratic system and to broaden support for a Nazi state.

Winkler has described how the Nazis gradually came to control many artisan and small trade middle-class interest organisations by infiltrating them at a local level and mobilising the members against their leaders until the whole organisation was run on NSDAP lines.<sup>877</sup> In Saxony too, the Nazis were able to infiltrate several powerful professional middle-class organisations from below eventually to control them. The determination of the organisations' leadership to ward off Nazi infiltration failed due to increasing pressure from their members. In early 1932 the organ of the trade council (*Gewerbekammer*) in the AH Borna reacted to internal pressure by some members in favour of a move towards the NSDAP and warned: "Our organisation should only have economic objectives and definitely has to remain free from party political influence."<sup>878</sup> Nine months later, before the new elections to the trade councils in autumn 1932, the paper regretted that the use of a single list was prevented by the NSDAP which had put up its own lists for all trade council elections. The organ emphasized

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<sup>875</sup> E.g. see the organ of the Ruhr heavy industry *Deutsche Führerbriefe: Politisch-wirtschaftliche Privatkorrespondenz* (D. Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic. Political Economy and Crisis* (1986, second edition, New York, London), pp. XXXI ff.).

<sup>876</sup> The DNVP member of parliament and VSI supporter Dr. Eckardt became President of the Saxon parliament in late 1932 and defeated the NSDAP candidate Kunz. Eckardt received support of some Nazi votes in his election (*VdSL*, 5. Wp, 89. Sitzung, 19.10.1932).

<sup>877</sup> Winkler, *Mittelstand*, pp. 171, 173.

<sup>878</sup> *Mitteilungen des Gewerbeverbandes in der AH Borna e.V.*, Nr. 1, Januar 1932, p. 2.

its warnings: "The trade association has nothing to do with party politics. On the contrary, it is a purely professional body ... Party political lists are therefore generally to be rejected. No vote should be given for these lists because the political divisions would spread to our professional representation at the cost of objective work."<sup>879</sup> However, its appeal fell on deaf ears and the NSDAP, as in other parts of Saxony<sup>880</sup>, won a majority of seats.<sup>881</sup>

The Nazis were also successful in infiltrating the most important agricultural organisation in Saxony, the *Landwirtschaftskammer* (Agricultural Chamber: LK). The LK was one of the most powerful professional interest groups in Saxony and was controlled by the *Sächsische Landvolk* (SLV), a right-wing farmers organisation which boasted 64,000 members in 1930<sup>882</sup> and was affiliated with the DNVP. The Nazis benefited from the extremely conservative and nationalist attitude of many farmers, an increasing agricultural crisis since the mid-1920s, and their own propaganda skills during the elections to the LK in 1931 (for the last aspect see the chapter 'Key Study'). In September 1923 the association of farmers in the AH Marienberg demanded that all *Volksgenossen* had to stick together and proclaimed: "The German *Reich* and *Volk*, our *Heimat* and Fatherland are on the brink of ruin and disintegration; the aim of our sworn enemy, the French, namely the destruction of Germany, is close to becoming reality."<sup>883</sup> In early 1924 the 'Association of Young Farmers', which claimed to have 20,000

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<sup>879</sup> Ibid., Nr. 10, Oktober 1932, p. 13.

<sup>880</sup> The NSDAP won 68.5 per cent of the vote among the 'crafts' trade councils, and 82.1 per cent among the 'trade and business' trade councils in the elections in the KH Chemnitz (Lobmeier, 'Mittelschichten', p. 104).

<sup>881</sup> *Gewerbeverband Borna*, Nr. 11, November 1932, p. 5.

<sup>882</sup> Reinhold, 'Landwirtschaftskammer', pp. 190-191.

<sup>883</sup> STA D, AH Glauchau, Nr. 24, p. 10.

members in Saxony, organised a fatherland demonstration in Wurzen. A military band participated too.<sup>884</sup> The president of the LK, Vogelsang, cited an article of the Nazi-friendly *Dresdner Nachrichten* in a speech to the chamber in March 1931 and argued that the First World War was a long-planned conspiracy under England's leadership to "destroy Germany's trade and Germany's power".<sup>885</sup> He demanded an end to reparation payments imposed by the dictated settlement of Versailles.<sup>886</sup>

First signs of a serious crisis in Saxon agriculture were felt in 1927.<sup>887</sup> One year later, as in other parts of Germany, Saxon farmers demonstrated against high taxes and for tariff barriers and made clear their readiness to use anti-democratic ways to put through their demands.<sup>888</sup> The SLV responded to the radicalized mood among the farmers by attempting to portray itself as an unpolitical professional interest party and participated with their own lists in elections - independent of the DNVP - from 1928 onwards. Despite this, however, the SLV lost more and more of its constituency to the more radical NSDAP.<sup>889</sup> New elections to the LK took place on 17 May 1931.<sup>890</sup> Several weeks before the poll the SLV leaders warned the electorate to make sure "that the election of members into the LK remains free of political influence and

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<sup>884</sup> STA D, SÄStKa, Nr. 135, Bezirk Leipzig, 10.1.1925.

<sup>885</sup> *Sächsische Landwirtschaftliche Zeitschrift (SLZ)*, Nr. 12, 22.3.1931, p. 158.

<sup>886</sup> Ibid.

<sup>887</sup> Lobmeier, 'Mittelschichten', pp. 23 ff.

<sup>888</sup> Ibid., pp. 84 ff.

<sup>889</sup> The SLV's election results: RW 1928: 3.2%; LW 1929: 5.2%; LW 1930: 4.6%; RW 1930: 4.0%; RW 1932I: 0.2. Also see Lobmeier, 'Mittelschichten', p. 86.

<sup>890</sup> Elections to the LK took place every six years and were open to anyone whose main or part-time profession was in agriculture and who was twenty-five years old. Additionally, voters needed to possess at least three hectare agriculturally used land (*SLZ*, Nr. 12, 22.3.1931, p. 159).

prevailing trends."<sup>891</sup> One week before the elections the SLV regretted that it was not possible, as in 1925, to put forward single lists because supporters of several political parties participated with their own lists. Indeed, the KPD, but particularly the NSDAP, participated with its own lists and made frantic efforts in the election campaign. The NSDAP won twenty-two of the forty seats.<sup>892</sup> The only reason why the NSDAP did not gain an absolute majority in the LK was because another eleven members of the chamber were elected by small professional bodies<sup>893</sup> which had not been infiltrated by the Nazis yet. The members of the newly elected LK, twenty-two Nazis and twenty-nine members of the nationalist bourgeoisie, co-operated in their work. The former chairman, Vogelsang, was re-elected with thirty-nine out of fifty votes. In his view the victory of the National Socialists was "a sign of the national will"; they were all "united by the national idea".<sup>894</sup> However, Vogelsang expressed the hope that the chamber would remain free of party political activities as this would disrupt its efficiency. Paul Körner, who was in charge of the Nazis' agricultural organisation in Saxony and who was elected deputy president, declared that his party was willing to co-operate and would not pursue party political activities.<sup>895</sup> However, *Der Freiheitskampf* became an official organ of the LK after the elections<sup>896</sup> and the Nazis began to infiltrate the SLV<sup>897</sup>. There was some resistance

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<sup>891</sup> Ibid., Nr. 13, 29.3.1931, p. 177.

<sup>892</sup> Ibid., Nr. 25, 21.6.1931, pp. 351-352.

<sup>893</sup> Ibid., Nr. 12, 22.3.1931, p. 159.

<sup>894</sup> Ibid., Nr. 28, 28.7.1931, p. 393.

<sup>895</sup> Ibid.

<sup>896</sup> FK, Nr. 31, 4.7.1931.

<sup>897</sup> After the elections to the LK the Nazis demanded 51 per cent of the management seats of the SLV, and a Nazi was elected into the management of the SLV in early 1932 (Lobmeier, 'Mittelschichten', pp. 87, 95).

among SLV leaders over subjection to the Nazis, and the *SLZ* continued to report professionally and without political bias, until the end of 1932.<sup>898</sup> Additionally, in early 1932 the leader of the association for farmers in the Erzgebirge condemned political activities which took place in the chamber<sup>899</sup>.

The Nazis were not always successful in the task of wooing bourgeois organisations. The nationalist 'Christian Association of Pupils' Parents' in Saxony shared many beliefs with the NSDAP.<sup>900</sup> However, Nazi incompetence hampered a rapprochement for a long time. In early 1931 the association complained bitterly because the NSDAP repeatedly failed to answer its questionnaires.<sup>901</sup> Only after this complaint did the Nazis improve their public relations with the association.

There were contacts between bourgeois organisations and the NSDAP in the 1920s, but they were not very frequent. The youth section of the rifle club in Aue came mainly from the NSDAP and *Wehrwolf*.<sup>902</sup> At a celebration of the gymnastics club Jahn in Dresden a swastika flag was seen in autumn 1924.<sup>903</sup> The Nazis attempted to make contact with the nationalist '*Bund Sachsen im Reich*'.<sup>904</sup> There were contacts between the GDJB and the

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<sup>898</sup> The only exception was in one edition in autumn 1931 when the *SLZ* hinted its opposition to the existing system and argued that in a new system the state would create possibilities that everyone could help himself (*SLZ*, Nr. 42, 18.10.1931, p. 561). The NSDAP's motion to transform the *SLZ* into a periodical (*SLZ*, Nr. 28, 28.7.1931, p. 393) was not carried through.

<sup>899</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1945, März 1932.

<sup>900</sup> E.g. in early 1932 it supported the referendum to dissolve the state parliament (*Mitteilungen des Landesverbandes der christlichen Elternverbände Sachsens*, 1. Quartal 1932, p. 5).

<sup>901</sup> Ibid., 1. Quartal 1931, p. 17.

<sup>902</sup> STA D, SÄStKa, Nr. 131, Dresden, 27.2.1925.

<sup>903</sup> Ibid., Nr. 135, 27.9.1924.

<sup>904</sup> BA DH, Kunz, Schreiben Förster/Leipzig an Führer von Bund Sachsen im Reich (on behalf of Tittmann), p. 14.

*Sächsischer Heimatschutz*. However, the latter refused to join the GDJB.<sup>905</sup> The *Deutscher Alpenverein Südmark* in Dresden, whose membership consisted mainly of Nazis, organised frequent hiking and ski trips.<sup>906</sup> Several Saxon restaurants subscribed to the *NSfS* for their guests.<sup>907</sup> In early 1928 the poultry-breeders' club in Annaberg wrote to the NSDAP headquarters and asked if Hitler, "our leader", would speak in their town.<sup>908</sup> There were contacts between the Nazis and the home owners association in Leipzig in summer 1930.<sup>909</sup>

The Nazis had good links with the influential right-wing 'National Club for Saxony' (*Nationaler Klub für Sachsen*: NKfS), which aimed at uniting DNVP, DVP and DVFP members for combined nationalist activities. The NKfS was founded in Dresden in May 1924 and had around 600 members throughout the state.<sup>910</sup> The organisation had strong links with the 'Saxon Association of Fatherland Clubs' (*Vereinigte Vaterländische Verbände Sachsen*), which aimed at uniting all nationalist clubs and associations in Saxony.<sup>911</sup> In particular Helmuth von Killinger's connections with these organisations<sup>912</sup> gave the Nazis respectability in powerful right-

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<sup>905</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr.11126/6.

<sup>906</sup> *NSfS*, Nr. 27, 5.9.1926.

<sup>907</sup> E.g. the *NSfS* was available in five restaurants in Wittgensdorf (ibid., Nr. 1/2, 9.1.1927).

<sup>908</sup> BA, NS 18, Nr. 5011, 11.3.1928.

<sup>909</sup> Ibid., Nr. 5011.

<sup>910</sup> *Berliner Tageblatt*, Nr. 232, 16.5.1924.

<sup>911</sup> The VVVS organised its first state meeting in the rooms of the NKfS in Dresden in February 1925 (SäStKa, Nr. 131, Dresden, 6.2.1925).

<sup>912</sup> Mutschmann and Studentkowski declared that Killinger had links with the NKfS and the 'high society' ('*bessere Gesellschaft*'). BDC, Mutschmann an Oberste Parteigericht der NSDAP, 4.12.1936, p. 2; BDC, Killinger, Studentkowski an Wettengel, 27.11.1936.

wing circles in the state. Hitler accepted an invitation of the NKfS and spoke in Dresden on 11.4.1930.<sup>913</sup>

The Nazis' efforts to woo the *Reichswehr* were not very successful during the *Kampfzeit*. In late 1923 the *Reichswehr* rejected the offer of the Zwickau Nazis' to support them in case of disturbances.<sup>914</sup> NSDAP support from army officers was the exception.<sup>915</sup> The reserved attitude of the local *Reichswehr* to the NSDAP only changed with the deepening of the crisis in the early 1930s and the growth of the SA. In spring 1932 the army (*Wehrkreiskommando IV*) established contact with the SA regarding the formation of border guard units.<sup>916</sup>

### (iii) Celebrations of the national right

At no time were the divisions in Saxon society more evident than during public celebrations, when the completely different attitudes of various groups became apparent.<sup>917</sup> This was particularly true during public holidays, which expressed identification with the democratic system and the Republic. The most important were the annual celebrations to commemorate the start of the revolution on 9 November 1918, and the passing of the constitution on 11 August 1919. On the republican side of the political spectrum the Social Democrats and liberals celebrated these occasions with mass

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<sup>913</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4.

<sup>914</sup> STA D, S StKa, Nr. 128, Zwickau, 9.11.1923.

<sup>915</sup> E.g. see BA DH, Z/C 17411, EK, 'NS Sachsen'.

<sup>916</sup> BDC, Killinger, SA, Schreiben, 7.7.1932.

<sup>917</sup> Also see G. L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses. Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (New York, 1975).

parades and festivals, while the national right expressed their open hatred.<sup>918</sup>

The November revolution was the greatest trauma of the national right. On its first anniversary they claimed: "All our misery is caused by the revolution."<sup>919</sup> The celebration of 11 August was regarded as the symbol of discord in the German *Volk*, the point when the nation split into two hostile camps.<sup>920</sup> The most important celebration of the national right was 18 January, the day the German Empire was founded in 1871 ("Day of the Fatherland"<sup>921</sup>). Although the Nazis' attitude was uneasy and ambivalent towards the idea of the *Reich* (*Reichsidee*)<sup>922</sup>, they frequently participated in celebrations with other supporters of the national right. The Saxon war hero and Nazi leader Hellmuth von Mücke was invited by the national right to their *Reichsgründungsfeier* in Dresden in January 1927. Mücke spoke about his war adventures in front of 500 guests.<sup>923</sup>

*Deutsche Tage* (literally 'German Days'), which took place at weekends throughout the year, were occasions where various groups of the national right came together and celebrated their nationalist/right-wing beliefs. The local Nazis, particularly in southwestern Saxony, played an important part in these celebrations.<sup>924</sup>

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<sup>918</sup> When the bourgeois government in Dresden abolished the holiday of Ninth November in late 1929, it caused enormous resentment among Social Democrats and liberals as they regarded the day as symbol of democracy and unity of the Republic (see the Chapter 'Working-Class Milieu').

<sup>919</sup> Reimus, 'Rechte' p. 235.

<sup>920</sup> Ibid., p. 243.

<sup>921</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>922</sup> See G. Paul, 'Der Sturm auf die Republik und der Mythos vom "Dritten Reich". Die Nationalsozialisten', in Lehnert/Mengerle, *Gedenktage*, pp. 258.

<sup>923</sup> STA D, KH Dresden, Nr. 262, Januar 1927.

<sup>924</sup> Paul also observed Nazi speakers at nationalist celebrations in the Saar region (Paul, *Saarland*, p. 43).



The schedule and rituals during these events were normally very similar. In Saxony *Deutsche Tage* featured particularly frequently between 1923-1925 and took place in small and medium sized towns. Typical was the *Deutscher Tag* in Mylau in May 1925, at which many national right supporters from the Vogtland gathered. The guests were welcomed with a concert on the market square on Saturday afternoon. In the evening there was a *Vaterländisch* celebration at which Lieutenant Uhlemann from Berlin spoke. Early next morning, while the *Frontbann* band woke up the guests, the police sent home Communists from Netzschkau, Mylau, and Reichenbach who came to disturb the celebrations. The guests marched from the market square to the field service on the sports ground. Afterwards there was a concert on the market square. In the afternoon the participants marched in rows of four through the town. There were about sixty flags, and the participants included members of the *Frontbann*, military- and war clubs, officers' union, *Reichsflagge*, *Jungdo* and others. The victims of the war were honoured by standing still and lowering the flags for two minutes. Afterwards the participants sang 'I had a comrade'. "Gregor Strasser, chemist from Landshut and member of the *Reichstag*, gave a speech on the sports ground where the parade ended. He attacked, among others, the Communists and Social Democrats, Wilson's fourteen points and the damaging influence of the Jews. The speech was received with great applause. The play 'Schlageter' was very successful too."<sup>925</sup>

The VSB's *Deutsche Tag* in Neuwelt was visited by 200 supporters of the national right in mid-February 1925. Four swastika flags

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<sup>925</sup> *Vogtländischer Anzeiger*, Nr. 109, 12.5.1925.

were consecrated, there was a performance of the play 'German loyalty', and the Nazi Erich Kunz from Zwickau gave the speech 'Heimat - Fatherland and Volk'.<sup>926</sup> 450 people visited the *Deutscher Tag* in Crimmitschau on the same weekend. Among others, the later Nazi leader Killinger gave a speech. The participants honoured the dead soldiers at the war memorial, there was a service with consecration of flags, and 1,100 people marched in the parade. There were also some fights with members of the *Reichsbanner*.<sup>927</sup> However, it would be wrong to suggest that the Nazis were always welcome visitors during nationalist festivals. Some participants in a fair in Zwickau in mid-1925 were appalled because the *Frontbann* participated with Swastika-banners. They decided not to take part in the parade.<sup>928</sup>

The national right was also united by the stab-in-the-back legend (*Dolchstoß-Legende*), which assumed that the German army was not defeated by the enemy from outside in the First World War, but by the treacherous left from within. The right-wing *Stollberger Anzeiger und Tageblatt* wrote in April 1924: "The SPD is to blame for the collapse and therefore the shameful *Diktat* of Versailles and the misery of the German Volk."<sup>929</sup> The *Frauensteiner Anzeiger* claimed to show "how the people around Fleißner and Menke in Dresden systematically ... worked for the collapse of our front and therefore for our destruction and misery."<sup>930</sup> Other right-wing papers like the *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, *Dresdner Nachrichten*,

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<sup>926</sup> STA D, SâStKa Nr. 131.

<sup>927</sup> Ibid.

<sup>928</sup> Ibid., Nr.132, Juni 1925.

<sup>929</sup> *Stollberger Anzeiger und Tageblatt*, Nr. 98, 26.4.1924.

<sup>930</sup> *Frauensteiner Anzeiger*, Nr. 95, 22.4.1922. The same article was also printed in the *Sächsische Elbzeitung*, Nr. 93, 21.4.1922.

*Erzgebirgische Volksfreund*, *Chemnitzer Nachrichten*, *Pirnaer Anzeiger* used the stab-in-the-back theory to attack the SPD.<sup>931</sup> These were also the first papers which sympathized with the local Nazi movement. However, even 'independent' newspapers like the *Wurzener Tageblatt* and the *Bautzener Nachrichten* made the same accusations.<sup>932</sup>

The Nazi youth also participated at nationalist celebrations. At the third Saxon *Reich* youth day in May 1925 there were 2000 visitors from the *Frontbann*, *Reichsflagge*, *Jungdo*, *Bund Sachsen im Reich*, *völkisch* gymnasts, and other patriotic people.<sup>933</sup>

Another powerful uniting experience for the national right, but also for most other bourgeois groups, was the cultivation of war memorials in commemoration of soldiers killed in the war. Here too, the Nazis were sometimes successful in assuming a leading role. The NSDAP reported of the consecration of a war memorial in Ruppertsgrün (AH Zwickau) at the end of 1927: "A large number of local inhabitants participated at the consecration of the memorial for the heroes killed in the world war on Sunday the sixth of November. It was a special day for us National Socialists. We helped to create the warrior memorial with pick and shovel. All local bourgeois organisations, the united military association of Werdau-Leubnitz with flag bearers and the local branch of the NSDAP with twenty Storm-troopers and several civilian party members took part. The consecration began with a service in our church. After the service the participants, led by our Storm-

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<sup>931</sup> E.g. see *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, Nr. 36, 6.2.1923; *Dresdner Nachrichten*, Nr. 42, 12.2.1923

<sup>932</sup> See 'Der Dolchstoß', *Wurzener Tageblatt*, Nr. 91, 16.4.1924; and 'Dolchstoß-Legende?', *Bautzner Nachrichten*, Nr. 268, 15.6.1924.

<sup>933</sup> STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/6, Mai 1925.

troopers with banner, marched to the memorial square, where General Schönfels from Dresden, who was born in Ruppertsgrün, gave the consecration speech. The local priest then consecrated the memorial. It was a solemn moment when the memorial was unveiled while the National Socialists saluted, the military association stood to attention, and the drum rolled. Afterwards the church community of Ruppertsgrün, the military association of Ruppertsgrün and ex General von Schönfels laid the wreath, and our leader Gräßer spoke with powerful words about those killed in the war. A final word from the local headteacher and the song 'I have devoted myself with heart and hand' ended the solemn celebration."<sup>934</sup> The integration of the Nazis in the local community of Ruppertsgrün helped to explain why the village became one of the earliest Nazi strongholds in Saxony. The local NSDAP gained 34.2 per cent of the vote in the May 1929 provincial elections.

A report in the *Deutsche Zeitung* about the erection of a war memorial in Plauen showed the deep divisions between the organised working class and the nationalist milieu: "The singers' union of Plauen erected a monument for its members who died during the war - 119 in number - in the pretty town park. A large bronze' sheet was fixed to a huge boulder, which was moved with incredible effort to its current location. It honours the dead heroes in their quality as soldiers and singers by a suitable design from the local artist Rudolf Zenker. The monument was unveiled in the presence of a huge crowd on Sunday, 28th of May. The locally published '*Volkszeitung für Südwestsachsen*', the paper of the independent SPD, was outraged by the vast number of participants

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<sup>934</sup> NSfS, Nr. 50, 11.12.1927.

and the impressive procession at which members of the singer unions, military and sports clubs marched and carried around fifty flags. The paper, which always distinguished itself by a particularly coarse language and which fiercely attacked anything which could be interpreted as an impression of German-*völkisch* thought and propaganda, expressed its venomous hatred in its report about the consecration of the monument: "Ugly! Ugly like the whole system which has caused this murder of the nations and now even plays hell with the corpse of the murdered! ... So ugly that it would be desirable at the first possible opportunity, to put a detonator into the backside of the disgraceful monument. And also one for the monument of the 134er, which will be erected near by."<sup>935</sup>

One issue of constant dispute between the conservatives/nationalists and Republican supporters concerned the use of flags. The former often expressed their dislike of the Republic by showing the 'black-white-and-red' flag of Wilhelmine Germany, or carrying their own consecrated flags, e.g. the Nazi swastika flag, to which they swore allegiance. The *Chemnitzer Tageblatt* covered a dispute about raising the 'black-white-and-red' flag in Werdau. The master decorator August Maaß raised a 'black-white-and-red' flag during a local fair. An SPD member of the town council ordered him to take the flag down, and eventually threatened to have the flag confiscated by the police. However, Maaß continued to display the flag throughout the festive week and was later fined 150 *Goldmark*. The Ministry of the Interior reversed the verdict and pointed out that it is not illegal to display a 'black-white-and-red' flag.<sup>936</sup>

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<sup>935</sup> *Deutsche Zeitung*, Nr. 255, 7.6.1922.

<sup>936</sup> *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, Nr. 198, 19.7.1924.

Reunion celebrations of war veterans also played an important part in the annual agenda of the nationalist milieu. In mid-1925 the Saxon police reported well attended regimental celebrations in Bautzen, Leipzig, Dresden, Chemnitz, Annaberg, Freiberg, Plauen Zwickau and Döbeln.<sup>937</sup> Nationalist and *völkisch*' organisations participated in great numbers.<sup>938</sup> The 'Saxon Military Association' was one of the largest organisations in Saxony, claiming 1,624 local branches with 206,325 members in mid-1925.<sup>939</sup> The Nazis participated on these occasions too and used similar aspects and rituals for their propaganda. There was a big military concert of the First Saxon SA band in summer 1929. The consecration of flags was attended by Göring, Killinger and Kunz.<sup>940</sup> Ex-soldiers of the 104 regiment in Chemnitz cheered the Nazis in June 1930.<sup>941</sup> A Nazi activist gave a "stirring speech" about '*Frontsozialismus*' (socialism at the front) at a party meeting in Dresden in September 1930. He talked about "the *Frontsozialismus* which inspired the army and *Heimat* in 1914" until bourgeois cowardice and Marxist traitors stabbed the army from behind.<sup>942</sup> The speaker blamed this betrayal for the current situation and claimed there would only be a positive change when the *Volk* remembered this *Frontsozialismus*, which was National Socialism.<sup>943</sup>

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<sup>937</sup> STA D, Mdl, Nr.11126/6, Juni 1925.

<sup>938</sup> Elliot analysed in an article about German military organisations: "When one considers that there were approaching 30,000 Kriegervereine which were honour-bound to turn out on national and church festivals, funerals of comrades, local Kreisverband events etc., here was to be found a significant source of irritation to the supporters of the Republic, and discontented industrial workers" (C. J. Elliot, 'The Kriegervereine and the Weimar Republic', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 10 (1) (1975), p. 114).

<sup>939</sup> STA D, Mdl 11126/6, Juli 1925.

<sup>940</sup> SB, Nr. 28, 14.7.1929.

<sup>941</sup> Ibid., Nr. 98, 20.6.30.

<sup>942</sup> FK, Nr. 34, 9.9.1930.

<sup>943</sup> Ibid., Nr. 34, 9.9.1930.

A brigade meeting of Storm-troopers in Markneukirchen in April 1931 proved to what extent the NSDAP integrated all the themes of the nationalist milieu in their celebrations and appealed to these groups. The setting was a festival in which all the citizens participated ("the streets were decorated with garlands and flags ... there was a concert and German dance in the evening").<sup>944</sup> The swastika flag was the symbol of rejection of the Republic and the desire for a new National Socialist state. Markneukirchen's economic and cultural background as a centre for the production of musical instruments provided the link with local tradition, the field service of a local priest provided the religious blessing, and the march of 3,000 Storm-troopers through the town gave the image of discipline, order, military strength, the memory of glorious days ("again and again it was said, that it was like in the good old peaceful days, when the military marched with ringing steps through the streets during exercises ... war veterans from 1870/71 received seats of honour")<sup>945</sup>, and a new beginning.

There were far fewer nationalist/conservative celebrations in the final years of the Republic. This leads to the speculation that this aspect of the conservative milieu partly disintegrated. More research is needed to analyse this development and its relation to the growth of the NSDAP.

#### (iv) The bourgeois press and the rise of the Saxon NSDAP

Most experts accept that the mass media, in particular the press, exerted a powerful influence in political opinion making. In the

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<sup>944</sup> *NSDAP Markneukirchen*, p. 29.

<sup>945</sup> *Ibid.*

early 1980s Richard Hamilton put forward the thesis that the re-orientation of the bourgeois press towards the NSDAP helped the party's rise from the late 1920s onwards.<sup>946</sup> However, there are no systematic investigations about the influence of the press in the rise of the Nazi Party. Very recently the political scientist Jürgen Falter produced several crucial findings in his illuminating book *Hitler's Wähler*. He confirmed that there was a general tendency among bourgeois newspapers to move to the right in the final years of the Republic, and that the press in rural areas and small towns tended to be NSDAP-friendly or at least not opposed to the party.<sup>947</sup> Falter also proved that the newspapers' move to the right helped the growth of the NSDAP in rural protestant areas from 1928 onwards.<sup>948</sup> Falter concluded that the NSDAP's electoral success, among other things, was helped by the bourgeois press. Overall, however, he argued that the influence of the press in voters' decision-making was less significant than Hamilton believed.<sup>949</sup>

The press in Saxony was clearly dominated by the bourgeoisie, which published ninety-four percent of all local newspapers (see Table 23 below).<sup>950</sup> The NSDAP's share of the press was, as in the *Reich*, extremely small.<sup>951</sup> The 25,000 copies of *Der Freiheitskampf*

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<sup>946</sup> R. F. Hamilton, *Who voted for Hitler?* (Princeton, NJ, 1982).

<sup>947</sup> Falter, *Wähler*, pp. 330, 334.

<sup>948</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>949</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>950</sup> Only eighteen of the overall 300 Saxon newspapers came from the working-classes (*Handbuch der deutschen Tagespresse* (1932), pp. 311-335).

<sup>951</sup> In the *Reich* 2.6 per cent of all newspapers sympathized openly with the NSDAP, in Saxony only 1.3 per cent (*Tagespresse*, pp. 27, 39).



competed with more than two million copies of the bourgeois and working class press.<sup>952</sup>

Several features of the local press support the argument about the extreme divisions in Saxon society. The press in Saxony was much more politicized than was the case in the rest of the *Reich*. Whereas

**Table 23:** Newspapers in Saxony in 1932: party allegiance and copies printed (number of newspapers in brackets for which number of copies was lacking):

party allegiance <sup>1</sup> :	Number	Copies	
NSDAP	5	25,000	(4?)
nationalist/right	80	588,791	(31?)
bourgeois/neutral	168	606,805	(74?)
liberal	3	28,300	
SPD/KPD	18	274,200 <sup>2</sup>	(6?)
rest	26	414,300	(17?)
overall	300	1,937,396	(132?)

1: nationalist/right: *national, rechts*, DNVP; bourgeois/neutral: *bürgerlich, heimatlich, regierungsfreundlich, republikanisch* (*Neue Leipziger Zeitung*), *wirtschaftspolitisch*, Zentrum; liberal: *liberal, demokratisch*.

2: including the KPD's figure of 119,300 copies, which is likely to be greatly overstated.

Source: calculated from *Handbuch der deutschen Tagespresse* (1932).

26.9 per cent of the newspapers in the Republic were affiliated with a party or a political cause, in Saxony the figure was 45.3 percent.<sup>953</sup> Particularly striking was the fact that the powerful representation of the Centre Party and the liberals in the middle, which accounted for thirteen per cent of all newspapers in the *Reich*, did not exist in Saxony. The only two significant democratic/liberal newspapers in the state, the *Oberlausitzer Tageszeitung* (12,300 copies) and the *Zittauer Morgen-Zeitung*

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<sup>952</sup> According to Otto Strasser, the *SB* reached a circulation of 50,000 (Kühnl, *NS Linke*, p. 4). Even this probably exaggerated figure was small compared with the bourgeois press.

<sup>953</sup> Calculated from *Tagespresse*, pp. 27, 39.

(13,000 copies), were published in the eastern towns of Zittau and Neugersdorf. This was an area with a strong liberal milieu which the Nazis found comparatively difficult to infiltrate before their seizure of power.<sup>954</sup> In the electoral district of Chemnitz-Zwickau, the stronghold of the NSDAP, the political orientation of the press was extremely right-wing and nationalistic. More than half (forty-two) of the eighty newspapers in the state which openly declared themselves as supporters of a nationalist or right wing cause, were published here.

In Saxony, and throughout Germany, newspapers of all political shades of opinion were published in big and medium sized towns, while independent or right-wing/nationalistic newspapers dominated in the countryside and in small and medium sized towns.<sup>955</sup> The local press of the Left or liberals was only present in fourteen of the total of 206 Saxon towns in which newspapers were published. The only place in Saxony where one of their newspapers had a local monopoly was the liberal '*Oberlausitzer Tageszeitung*' in Neugersdorf (AH Löbau). There was not a single Saxon town where the only local newspaper was left-wing. At the same time the right-wing press enjoyed a monopoly in forty-seven small and medium sized towns.<sup>956</sup> It is noticeable that most of these places,

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<sup>954</sup> In the June 1930 state elections the NSDAP received 8.0 per cent in the AH Löbau, 9.2 percent in the AH Zittau, and 16.9 per cent in the town of Zittau. Its average in Saxony was 14.4 per cent. In the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections the NSDAP received 32.9 per cent in the AH Zittau, 38.7 per cent in the AH Löbau, and 39.6 per cent in the town of Zittau. Its average in Saxony was 41.3 per cent.

<sup>955</sup> Falter, *Wähler*, p. 333.

<sup>956</sup> The places were (NSDAP election results in the July 1932 *Reichstag* election in brackets): Adorf/Vogtland (60.1%), Adorf/Erzgebirge (41.0%), Annaberg (58.2%), Augustusburg (58.3%), Bischofswerda, Buchholz (48.9%), Burkhardtsdorf (32.6%), Dahlen, Drehbach (58.2%), Frankenberg (41.4%), Frauenstein, Geithain, Gelenau (37.7%), Geyer (51.0%), Grimma (35.2%), Groitzsch, Großenhain, Großschönau, Hainichen, Hermsdorf, Hohenstein-Ernstthal (41.7%), Klaffenbach (34.7%), Klotzsche, Leukersdorf (46.6%),

like Adorf/Vogtland (NSDAP's poll in the July 1932 *Reichstag* election: 60.1 per cent), Annaberg (58.2%), Marienberg (54.8%), Markneukirchen (72%) and Thum (59.9%), were traditional Nazi strongholds. However, a monopoly for a local right-wing paper was not necessarily a guarantee of Nazi success. For example the NSDAP scored election results far below the state average in the towns of Grimma (35.2%), Klaffenbach (34.7%) and Radeberg (35.2%). These, however, were exceptions which can be explained in terms of other factors. The SPD's local newspaper, the *Volkszeitung für das Muldental*, was distributed in Grimma, and Klaffenbach and Radeberg were located at the outskirts of two large cities with a strong SPD press (Chemnitz, Dresden). Furthermore, all three places had a large working-class population.

Large parts of the bourgeois press helped the Nazis to spread their ideas by frequently announcing and reporting their meetings. Conservative newspapers, like the *Erzgebirgische Volksfreund*, were sympathetic towards the Nazi movement from its first meetings at the end of 1922 onwards.<sup>957</sup> The *LNN* reviewed Hitler's speech in Altenburg in April 1926 thus: "His arguments are carefully thought out ... His speech was intellectually well balanced."<sup>958</sup>

The respectability of the local NSDAP was enhanced when many conservative/nationalist papers supported the Hugenberg/Hitler referendum against the Young Plan at the end of 1929. The SPD in

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Liebertwolkwitz, Lommatzsch, Lugau (43.3%), Lunzenau, Marienberg (54.8%), Markneukirchen (72%), Mügeln, Netzschkau (42.2%), Neuhausen, Neukirchen, Oelsnitz/Erzgebirge (43.7%), Olbernhau (49.0%), Radeberg (35.2%), Rodewisch, Sayda, Schandau, Stollberg (45.8%), Thum (59.9%), Treuen, Waldenburg, Waldheim, Weinböhla, Zwönitz.

<sup>957</sup> E.g. see *Erzgebirgischer Volksfreund*, Nr. 281, 3.12.1922.

<sup>958</sup> *LNN*, Nr. 101, 12.4.1926.

Chemnitz warned the working class in late November that the 'right-wing' *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, which normally printed 5,000-7,000 copies, planned to flood the Erzgebirge with a special edition of 100,000 copies.<sup>959</sup> After the referendum received even more support in the electoral district of Chemnitz-Zwickau than in rural Pomerania, the SPD accused the three 'independent' bourgeois papers in Chemnitz of "outrageous irresponsibility" because of their "fierce competition for the favour of swastika and Stahlhelm."<sup>960</sup> The *Chemnitzer Tageblatt* comprehensively covered local NSDAP meetings and became an NSDAP paper in all but name.<sup>961</sup>

It is worth quoting a longer report of a NSDAP meeting during the Young campaign by a local bourgeois paper in the Erzgebirge: "The primary teacher Göpfert from Glauchau, an excellent speaker, spoke to the people of the Erzgebirge about the slavery of the German Volk at a meeting of the National Socialists in the 'German House' in Buchholz. After a short speech of welcome by the chairman Martin, the speaker immediately got down to his theme with great anger and with completely convincing and rich economic and political knowledge. Whatever one thinks of National Socialism, one had to believe what one heard here. The speaker ended by saying that there was one conclusion: Finally become men and women of action! You have to fight like the soldier at the front to protect the fatherland ... The end of Göpfer's speech released a storm of approval. And this was appropriate! Because whatever party you belong to, you need to judge as a German in these hours

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<sup>959</sup> See 'Wehrt der Lügenflut!', *ChVSt*, Nr. 249, 24.10.1929.

<sup>960</sup> See 'Wo liegt Chemnitz?', *ibid.*, Nr. 262, 11.11.1929.

<sup>961</sup> E.g. see the long article about the Killinger meeting in *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, Nr. 254, 14.9.1929.

and yesterday you were only able to say: what this man said was right!"<sup>962</sup>

The right-wing *Dresdner Nachrichten*, which sold 36,000 copies, was also converted to the Nazi cause by 1930. Its special correspondent at the NSDAP *Gau* meeting in Plauen in mid-1930 described a "*Volksfestiva*" with an "impressive and romantic torch parade" and "competently led conferences". The article went on: "The citizens displayed an ample quantity of flags and showered the marching brownshirts, in the main young men, with flowers. The applause of the masses and 'heil' shouts were drowned out by the countless SA bands which played military music."<sup>963</sup> The Nazis in Werdau (AH Zwickau) were also blessed with a local paper which supported their cause wholeheartedly, which they warmly acknowledged after the seizure of power: "The *Werdauer Zeitung* stood at our side as an undaunted fighting partner."<sup>964</sup> When the *Oschatzer Gemeinnützige*, a DNVP paper, and other provincial newspapers argued that the attitude of the National Socialists regarding private ownership was "highly questionable"<sup>965</sup>, another bourgeois paper, the 'neutral' *Tageblatt Borna*, quickly allowed the Nazis to publish an article to put things right: "The National Socialists generally accept the principle of private ownership and puts it under state protection."<sup>966</sup>

The collection of newspaper clippings in the state archive in Dresden gives a sample of the extent of support the Saxon NSDAP

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<sup>962</sup> *Obererzgebirgische Zeitung*, Nr. 252, 26.10.1929 (in 'Die anderen über uns', *SB*, Nr. 47, 24.11.1929).

<sup>963</sup> See 'Landesparteitag der Nationalsozialisten', *Dresdner Nachrichten*, Nr. 255, 2.6.1930.

<sup>964</sup> STA D, ZAS, Nr. 429.

<sup>965</sup> *Oschatzer Gemeinnützige*, 23.5.1929.

<sup>966</sup> *Tageblatt Borna*, 28.5.1929.

received from nationalist/right-wing newspapers before autumn 1930<sup>967</sup>: *Dresdner Anzeiger*, *Dresdner Nachrichten*, *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, *Allgemeine Zeitung Chemnitz*, *Erzgebirgischer Volksfreund*, *Obererzgebirgische Zeitung*, *Erzgebirgische Nachrichten und Anzeigenblatt*, *Vogtländischer Anzeiger- und Tageblatt*, *Nachrichten für Grimma*, *Zittauer Nachrichten*, *Sächsischer Postillion*, *Waldheimer Tageblatt*, *Werdauer Zeitung*, *Crimmitschauer Tageblatt*, *Oschatzer Gemeinnützige*, *Auerbacher Zeitung*, *Freiberger Anzeiger*, *Bautzner Nachrichten*. Several independent/bourgeois newspapers, like the *Tageblatt Borna*, *Wurzener Tageblatt*, and *Westlausitzer Zeitung*, supported the NSDAP in their propaganda effort too. From 1931 onwards they were joined by many more right-wing and bourgeois/neutral newspapers which were sympathetic to the NSDAP.<sup>968</sup> The nationalist *Dahleener Nachrichten* wrote in early 1932: "Only National Socialism can save us"<sup>969</sup>, and the 'independent' *Nossener Anzeiger* celebrated a Nazi success in mid-1932: "Killinger in Nossen. A unique propaganda success."<sup>970</sup>

The bourgeois newspapers reinforced middle-class anxieties about a socialist revolution and helped to increase the divisions in Saxon society between left and right. Between 1919 and 1923 they vehemently attacked the SPD government and shared responsibility for its illegal dismissal by the *Reich*. In 1923 the Saxon intelligence service reported: "The press which represents

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<sup>967</sup> STA D, ZAS, Nr. 425-428.

<sup>968</sup> E.g. the officially independent *Tharandter Tageblatt*, the bourgeois *Riesaer Tageblatt* and *Klingenthaler Nachrichten*, and the nationalist/right-wing *Erzgebirgische Zeitung*, *Obererzgebirgischer General-Anzeiger*, *Lommatzscher Anzeiger*, *Schönburger Tageblatt*, *Vogtländischer Anzeiger*, *Sächsischer Kurier*.

<sup>969</sup> *Dahleener Nachrichten*, Nr. 40, 17.2.1932.

<sup>970</sup> *Nossener Anzeiger*, Nr. 128, 3.6.1932.

the political viewpoint of the bourgeoisie, indulges in daily attacks against the current Zeigner government", wrote of "a Bolshevist like government", and highlighted the terror felt about the unemployed and *Proletarische Hundertschaften*.<sup>971</sup> The influential *LNN* spoke of the 'Communist *Knüppel* guard'<sup>972</sup>, and the DVP press was not alone in describing Zeigner as a 'traitor'.<sup>973</sup>

In all election campaigns after the fall of the Zeigner government the bourgeois press warned the population about the threat of a socialist revolution if the Marxist parties should win. They reminded the population of the Zeigner government, 'red terror', disturbances, casualties and lootings. Terror reports from Soviet Russia and the unchristian ideology of the Marxist parties were widely used themes in bourgeois papers.<sup>974</sup> A weekly church paper for two villages in the AH Stollberg warned in early 1930: "The Bolshevist government has led a fight against the Church for twelve years, it has not dared to wipe it out yet, but is preparing to do so ... Every state rests on the faith of God. This ultimate belief is abandoned, destroyed and wiped out in Russia ... these developments in Russia, once they are completed, will become a model for Europe. Today Russia, tomorrow and thereafter the other states."<sup>975</sup> Nationalist papers said Germany could either withstand the current crisis or sink in Bolshevist anarchy. Before the September 1930 *Reichstag* elections the *Dresdner Nachrichten* wrote: "This fight is about ... Germany's future, about all our

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<sup>971</sup> Ibid.

<sup>972</sup> See 'Die kommunistische Knüppelgarde in Sachsen', *LNN*, Nr.99, 12.4.23.

<sup>973</sup> See 'Der MP als Landesverräter', *Zeit* (STA D, AH Glauchau, Nr.24, p. 14).

<sup>974</sup> See also Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', pp. 13-14.

<sup>975</sup> *Mitteilungen für die Kirchengemeinden Nieder- und Oberwürschnitz*, Nr. 2, Februar 1930.

futures, about whether misery of unemployment and the decline of the economy will increase, whether the coming winter will spread a shroud of unutterable misery and slow languish over our fatherland from which will arise the red blood-soaked face of Russian Bolshevism ... This is what the fight is about. It is not about the destiny of parties, it is about the destiny of our *Volk*."<sup>976</sup> The situation in the Soviet Union served as a battlefield between the bourgeois and Marxist parties. While the former painted the picture of a barbaric state, the latter sent delegates to Soviet Russia who reported back to Saxony on the good living conditions the Russians enjoyed.

The bourgeois papers' main aim was to prevent a Marxist victory. Before early 1930 they only rarely expressed a preference for any bourgeois party in this task. Typical was the advice of the right-wing *Oelsnitzer Volksbote* before the May 1929 state elections: "Vote for whom you want, but do not vote for the Communists and Social Democrats. We all have to die one day, but it does not have to be through mass murder or starvation as in Soviet-Russia."<sup>977</sup> When the economic crisis hit Saxony and the political atmosphere was radicalized at the end of the 1920s, an increasing number of right-wing/nationalistic papers, particularly in rural areas, became sympathetic to the NSDAP. The Nazis' pronounced the same anti-Marxist slogans as the bourgeois parties, but represented a fresh political force with an untainted background and put forward a vision of hope for the German nation. Many bourgeois papers expressed hope that the NSDAP would join the 'anti-Marxist' front. This explains why many conservative papers expressed their

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<sup>976</sup> *Dresdner Nachrichten*, Nr. 432, 14.9.1930.

<sup>977</sup> *Oelsnitzer Volksbote*, Nr. 107, 10.5.1929.



disappointment when the Nazis decided against a coalition government after the May 1929 state elections. The *Allgemeine Zeitung* in Chemnitz wrote: "Particularly because we regard the National Socialists as valuable allies, we would deeply regret it if they remain content to criticise and stand aside (from any responsibility)."<sup>978</sup>

A year later, however, more papers had thrown their support behind the NSDAP. The nationalistic *Obererzgebirgische Zeitung* reported about a Nazi meeting: "Against Corruption! - Never again a Soviet Saxony."<sup>979</sup> This headline could have come from any bourgeois/conservative party, however, the paper elaborated on this theme: "The NSDAP, while other parties did not seem to care, was active against the slavery of Germany."<sup>980</sup> The *Dresdner Nachrichten* wrote: "National Socialism attempts to keep awake the national idea and the idea to free the German Volk from unbearable suppression."<sup>981</sup>

The *Crimmitschauer Anzeiger* provided a good example of how a conservative paper turned towards the NSDAP. In the May 1929 state election campaign it warned about a 'red wave', described the grave consequences of a Left government for Saxony, and highlighted the Marxists' opposition to christian schools.<sup>982</sup> The paper did not declare any party preference in their crusade against Marxism. A year later, however, the *Crimmitschauer Anzeiger* threw its support behind the NSDAP and rejoiced after the June 1930 state elections: "The victory is ours!" The paper praised Nazi

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<sup>978</sup> See 'Verwunderung - Verwirrung - Entrüstung', *SB*, Nr. 22, 2.6.1929.

<sup>979</sup> *Obererzgebirgische Zeitung*, Nr. 134, 12.6.1930.

<sup>980</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>981</sup> *Dresdner Nachrichten*, Nr. 252, 30.5.1930.

<sup>982</sup> *Crimmitschauer Anzeiger*, Nr. 84, 13/14.4.1929; Nr. 100, 30.4.1929

propaganda and the fact that the NSDAP was not linked with the corrupt system.<sup>983</sup>

Various 'independent' newspapers picked up National Socialist slogans, produced articles about the movement, and moved more and more to the right. The *Bautzner Tageblatt* printed a long article written by Killinger<sup>984</sup>, and the *Chemnitzer Neueste Nachrichten* commented on another unsuccessful attempt to elect a new Prime Minister in Saxony in late July 1930: "The *Volk* is without a leader"<sup>985</sup>.

The 'independent' *Tageblatt Rödertal Zeitung und Arnsdorfer Zeitung* advised its readers before the September 1930 *Reichstag* election to vote for "strong and honest personalities ... The voter should only support parties which work consciously to rebuild the German fatherland and to whom the word Germany means more than anything (the importance is to vote!)."<sup>986</sup> Two years later the paper was firmly behind the NSDAP. It described a "fascinating" Hitler rally in Dresden (Nr. 89, 26.7.1932) and warned about the increasing dangers of a civil war from a united KPD and SPD front, who, among other things, beat up Nazis (Nr. 90, 28.7.1932). After the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections the paper expressed its sorrow that the NSDAP did not gain an absolute majority (Nr. 92, 2.8.1932). Jürgen Falter rightly points out that even if one establishes a link between the political leaning of the local press and the electoral success of the NSDAP, it is difficult to determine cause and effect. Was the local press National Socialist because most of its readers

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<sup>983</sup> See 'Im Spiegel der Presse', SVB, Nr. 144, 24.6.1930; and *Crimmitschauer Anzeiger*, Nr. 167, 21.7.1930.

<sup>984</sup> *Bautzner Tageblatt*, Nr. 132, 10.6.1930.

<sup>985</sup> *Chemnitzer Neueste Nachrichten*, Nr. 169, 29.7.1930.

<sup>986</sup> *Tageblatt Rödertal Zeitung und Arnsdorfer Zeitung*, Nr. 110, 13.9.1930.

were, or was it the other way around?<sup>987</sup> It often seemed a two-way process which reflected the continuous radicalization of politics. Several local newspapers were more or less forced to adopt a more lenient line towards the NSDAP in the face of its increasing popularity among its readers. Until the September 1930 *Reichstag* election the 'independent' *Zwickauer Tageblatt* refused to accept National Socialist advertisements or announcements for meetings which were supplemented with 'no entry for Jews' or were in any way anti-Semitic. But the Nazis were later able to report: "Thereafter the *Zwickauer Tageblatt* had to adopt a friendlier line towards us albeit reluctantly ... only out of instinct for survival, not because of conviction."<sup>988</sup> Furthermore, the Social Democrats in Chemnitz argued that the *Allgemeine Zeitung* in Chemnitz supported the Hugenberg/Hitler referendum at the end of 1929 mainly due to its declining subscriptions and the fact that the local industrialists backed the referendum. The SPD wrote: "Subscribers left in their thousands because the attitude of the paper was not sufficiently nationalistic."<sup>989</sup> Something similar happened to the bourgeois papers in Glauchau, the *Glauchauer Tageblatt und Anzeiger* and the *Glauchauer Zeitung*. In early 1931 the SPD reported that both papers "recently seemed to be falling over themselves in their efforts to appear friendly to the Nazis."<sup>990</sup> Papers which traditionally supported the political right, drifted more and more towards the Nazis. In early 1930 the *Werdauer Zeitung* turned against Hindenburg after he had not joined the Hugenberg-Hitler referendum. The paper explained: "Germany

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<sup>987</sup> Falter, *Wähler*, p. 327.

<sup>988</sup> *FK*, Nr. 49, 27.2.1932.

<sup>989</sup> See 'Wo liegt Chemnitz?', *ChVSt*, Nr. 262, 11.11.1929.

<sup>990</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 28, 21.3.1931.

needs a fresh and energetic man as president who is in the prime of his life, and who can seize power on his own initiative! We can not afford to have someone as head of the *Reich* who is only pursuing representative functions!"<sup>991</sup>

The Nazis faced severe problems when the local bourgeois press was not sympathetic to their ideas. The *NSfS* wrote in mid-1926: "The public meeting which we organised in Hermsdorf/Erzgebirge on Sunday the 9th of May did not draw the expected crowd because the local newspaper was strangely not delivered on Saturday, as usual, but on Sunday!"<sup>992</sup> The Saxon NSDAP also blamed the unsympathetic press in Leipzig for their difficulties in the town: "In no large city in Saxony is there more need for the spread of the National Socialist press than in Leipzig."<sup>993</sup> Additionally, the *FK* felt the need to introduce the column 'Leipzig's Journalism'.<sup>994</sup>

An increasing number of bourgeois newspapers, in rural areas and large towns (Chemnitz, Plauen, Dresden), showed open sympathies for the NSDAP before 1933.<sup>995</sup> Nevertheless it is also true that the largest Saxon papers, *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* (180,000 copies) and the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* (110,000 copies), and many other bourgeois papers did not support the Nazi Party and its radicalism. However, they often sympathized with some of the nationalist ideology of the far-right, appeared similarly helpless as the traditional parties in providing a vision of a brighter future,

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<sup>991</sup> *SVB*, Nr. 64, 17.3.1930.

<sup>992</sup> *NSfS*, Nr. 13, 30.5.1926.

<sup>993</sup> *FK*, Nr. 234, 7.10.1931.

<sup>994</sup> *NSfS*, Nr. 11, 13.3.1927.

<sup>995</sup> Also see W. Pyta, *Gegen Hitler und für die Republik. Die Auseinandersetzung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie mit der NSDAP in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf, 1989), pp. 404-405.

and were often not explicit enough about the Nazis radicalism and the consequences of Nazi rule. The 'independent' *Sächsische Dorfzeitung und Elbgaupresse* wrote: "The great majority of the German *Volk* longs for nothing more than work and order. However, radicalism will always create uncertainty and the disintegration of state and economy ... A free *Volk* is unworthy of dictatorship."<sup>996</sup> The only comment the same paper made after the NSDAP won 37.3 per cent of the vote in the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections was that it was "against violence and terror."<sup>997</sup> The warnings of the *DNN* on the day of the July 1932 *Reichstag* election were only half-hearted and too late: "The greatest danger a state can face is rule by a single dominating party or even a party dictatorship ... Hatred, or the stirring up of hatred, will not provide any political solution. Only the *Volkgemeinschaft* which removes hatred and the belief in panaceas."<sup>998</sup> The fact that most bourgeois newspapers increasingly withheld any criticism against the NSDAP, often because they did not want to alienate some of their readers<sup>999</sup>, was crucial in making the Nazis respectable in Saxon society.

**(v) The relation of the NSDAP with bourgeois parties in Saxony**

The relation between bourgeois parties and the NSDAP changed several times. Between 1925 and early 1929 the bourgeois parties were comparatively indifferent to the few Nazis. The two NSDAP members of the state parliament supported the bourgeois

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<sup>996</sup> *Sächsische Dorfzeitung und Elbgaupresse*, Nr. 214, 13/14.9.1930.

<sup>997</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 179, 2.8.1932.

<sup>998</sup> *DNN*, Nr. 178, 31.7.1932.

<sup>999</sup> Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', p. 71.

government and were noticeable for their absence in the chamber. When the Nazi movement started to grow from early 1929 onwards the bourgeois parties showed interest and frequent signs of sympathy towards the new phenomenon. The Nazis were seen to belong to the 'anti-Marxist front', and therefore to be one of them. When the NSDAP won five seats and a key position in parliament in the May 1929 state election, it became clear that the Nazis had their own ambitions. They did not shrink from disturbing the fragile political status quo in parliament - which favoured the bourgeoisie - to increase their power. An increasingly unstable relationship between NSDAP and bourgeois parties developed. On the one hand the Nazis tolerated Bünger's government and co-operated with the bourgeois parties.<sup>1000</sup> On the other hand, however, they continuously threatened to bring down the government when their demands were not met. Finally the NSDAP initiated Bünger's resignation when it withdrew its support from the government in February 1930. Henceforth, Saxony was in a state of 'political limbo' until the new state elections in June 1930. The bourgeois parties disliked disruption and instability. The Saxon industrialists, who had parliamentary support among the DVP and DNVP, expressed their annoyance that the Nazis had brought down two "excellent governments" and described the June 1930 state elections as "the most unnecessary of all election campaigns".<sup>1001</sup>

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<sup>1000</sup> All bourgeois parties and the NSDAP condemned Germany's sole responsibility in the outbreak of the First World War (VdSL, 4. Wp, 11. Sitzung, 23.10.1929). The NSDAP supported the government motion to abandon the holiday of Ninth November and even tried to top it by bringing in a motion to abandon the holiday of May the First (Ibid., 11. Sitzung, 23.10.1929). All bourgeois parties and the NSDAP passed a motion in favour of war invalids (Ibid., 19. Sitzung, 12.12.1929).

<sup>1001</sup> *SI*, Nr. 26, 28.6.1930.

The bourgeois parties' attitudes towards the NSDAP ranged from attacks against the Nazis (particularly in the June 1930 election campaign) to wooing their support (generally in parliament after May 1929). In the June 1930 state election campaign the leader of the parliamentary DVP, Blüher, mobilized the voters to form a "united front against the dangers of Socialism and National Socialism"<sup>1002</sup>, and his party colleague, Dr. Schneider, asked the party members to fight against the National Socialists.<sup>1003</sup> The SPD noted that this was the "first time that the party officially distanced itself from the National Socialists."<sup>1004</sup> However, this was a late and half-hearted response to the NSDAP, which after all had brought down two DVP-led governments and attacked it for keeping the "administration filled with Marxists", and "wasting millions in the Ministry of Labour and Welfare under Elsner". In the view of the *SB*, "there is no great difference between the Marxists and the DVP ... The DVP betrayed the bourgeoisie."<sup>1005</sup> After the June 1930 state election the WP, DVP, DNVP, SLV, Vrp and CSVD allied with the NSDAP in July and October to appoint Krugg von Nidda und von Falkenstein (DNVP) as Prime Minister.<sup>1006</sup> The NSDAP's Gregor Strasser would have become Minister of the Interior under Nidda. The Saxon Nazis gave moderate and conciliatory speeches in parliament during this phase. Their parliamentary leader, Fritsch, declared in late July that their aim was to overthrow the "unjust system", but that they

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<sup>1002</sup> The Nazis were criticised because of their revile of Hindenburg (see 'Aufmarsch zur Sachsenwahl', *Dresdner Anzeiger*, Nr. 255, 2.6.1930).

<sup>1003</sup> *DVZ*, Nr. 127, 3.6.1930.

<sup>1004</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1005</sup> *SB*, Nr. 76, 23.5.1930.

<sup>1006</sup> *VdSL*, 5. Wp, 2. Sitzung, 15.7.1930, p. 25; *ibid.*, 7. Sitzung, 7.10.1930, pp. 197-198.

would always use legal means for this purpose.<sup>1007</sup> In early October Fritsch tried to underline his party's abilities to take over government responsibility by referring to Thuringia and Braunschweig<sup>1008</sup>, and his colleague Kunz was almost voted parliamentary president in mid-November.<sup>1009</sup>

There are several reasons why the 'honeymoon' between most bourgeois parties and the NSDAP ended very quickly henceforth. First, the Nazis were disillusioned because the growth of their mandates had not resulted in any gain in parliamentary power. They did not get the Ministry of the Interior, and their bourgeois allies deserted them when they voted for Hickmann to become vice-president of parliament before Kunz, who only became second vice president.<sup>1010</sup> The NSDAP showed its new opposition course when it rejected the budget in December 1930<sup>1011</sup>, when the whole Nazi parliamentary faction left parliament "in protest against a one-sided 'parliamentary presidency'"<sup>1012</sup>, and in early 1931 several Nazis were excluded from parliament because of insulting remarks.<sup>1013</sup>

Secondly, the NSDAP's ambition in the state parliament and their disturbing activities were checked by a political truce which developed against the NSDAP in the aftermath of the June elections. The VNR's, DDP's and SPD's toleration of Schick's cabinet of experts without Nazi participation<sup>1014</sup> sealed the Nazis' fate as a powerless

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<sup>1007</sup> Ibid., 4. Sitzung, 22.7.1930, p. 71.

<sup>1008</sup> Ibid., 7. Sitzung, 7.10.1930, p. 213.

<sup>1009</sup> Ibid., 12. Sitzung, 13.11.1930.

<sup>1010</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid., 18. Sitzung, 11.12.1930, p. 685.

<sup>1012</sup> Ibid., 27. Sitzung, 27.1.1931, p. 960.

<sup>1013</sup> E.g. Dönicke (ibid., 26. Sitzung, 29.1.1931, p. 981) and Lasch (ibid., 27. Sitzung, 3.2.1931, p. 1012)

<sup>1014</sup> See the statements of DDP and VNR in ibid., 7.10.1930, pp. 200, 203.



parliamentary force until March 1933. Lastly, the DVP moved away from its often sympathetic attitude towards the NSDAP. It is true that an outcry went through the Saxon DVP when its parliamentarians under Blüher's leadership failed to give the Nazi candidate Kunz their vote for President of the Saxon parliament, and made possible the election of the Social Democrat Weckel in late 1930. Pressure from the constituencies soon led to Blüher's resignation.<sup>1015</sup> Additionally, the call of the Saxon DVP for a more aggressive foreign policy under the slogan 'away with Versailles' emphasized its break with Stresemann's conciliatory policy and its drift to the right from late 1930 onwards.<sup>1016</sup> However, when the DVP's problems with Frick became apparent in Thuringia, the Saxon DVP also moved away from the NSDAP. In February 1931 a DVP parliamentarian attacked the Nazis for their violence and radicalism, and their role in Thuringia.<sup>1017</sup> Several months later the NSDAP's state leadership described their frustration in a letter to the Munich headquarters: "The reason why we do not profit from the success of the last election lies in the behaviour of the middle parties, especially the DVP, which is particularly spiteful towards us since the fall of Frick in Thuringia."<sup>1018</sup> The Saxon Nazis complained about their "complete helplessness due to the co-

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<sup>1015</sup> See *Meißner Volkszeitung*, Nr. 271, 21.11.1930. The DVP district of Freiberg had disapproved the action of their parliamentary party, supported Hardt's vote for Kunz, and unanimously declared its confidence in Kunz (see *Zittauer Morgen Zeitung*, Nr. 268, 16.11.1930). The DVP district of Eastern Saxony asked Blüher to resign (see *SVB*, Zwickau, Nr. 270, 20.11.1930).

<sup>1016</sup> See 'Volkspartei gegen Stresemann', in *SVB*, Nr. 270, 20.11.1930.

<sup>1017</sup> *VdSL*, 5. Wp, 27. Sitzung, 3.2.1931, p. 1033.

<sup>1018</sup> BA, Sammlung Schumacher, Nr. 208, Bd. 1, Plauen an München, 23.5.1931.

operation between SPD and the middle parties in the state parliament."<sup>1019</sup>

Throughout the Weimar years the DNVP co-operated with the NSDAP more than any other significant bourgeois party. After the NSDAP was declared illegal in the Republic at the end of 1923, the Saxon DNVP proposed a motion in parliament to reverse the ban.<sup>1020</sup> Both parties frequently allied in parliament and local councils<sup>1021</sup> with the final aim of creating a new political system. Professor Siegert, DNVP member of the Saxon parliament, spoke to his constituency about the bankruptcy of the 'Young-System' and described the September 1930 *Reichstag* elections as a political turning point: "They were a great, impressive victory for the National Socialists ... The outcome of these elections is the clear awakening of our nation and the victorious penetration of the national idea into the masses."<sup>1022</sup>

All conservative parties and the NSDAP agreed on certain issues where they formed a united front. They all united to pass a bill in parliament which introduced a compulsory commemoration hour in the week before *Totensonntag* (last Sunday before Advent commemorating the dead) for those who died in the war.<sup>1023</sup> They all condemned Remarque's book 'All quiet on the western Front' and welcomed the fact that Schieck's government was the first to propose that the *Reich* censor should ban the film<sup>1024</sup>; they also

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<sup>1019</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1020</sup> Stoschek, 'Zur Entwicklung', p. 271.

<sup>1021</sup> E.g. when the NSDAP in Leipzig announced a possible referendum to dissolve the local town council the DNVP declared its support (STA D, MdI, Nr. 11126/4, September 1930).

<sup>1022</sup> 'Am Sonntag vor einem Jahr', *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, Nr. 355, 23.12.1930.

<sup>1023</sup> *VdSL*, 5. Wp, 31. Sitzung, 17.2.1931.

<sup>1024</sup> Ibid., 18. Sitzung, 11.12.1930, p. 637; *ibid.*, 30. Sitzung, 12.2.1931.

supported the removal of French flags during an international competition between French and German athletes in Meißen<sup>1025</sup>; and finally, they all united in a bill against ungodly movements.<sup>1026</sup> On the one hand the Nazis were noticeable for extremely aggressive speeches against the Left in parliament, on the other hand they continued to support the bourgeois parties with conciliatory remarks. The Nazi student Werner Studentkowski, in particular, was known for his notorious parliamentary speeches. Scuffling broke out and the parliamentary session had to be adjourned when he remarked that "every criminal is a Marxist."<sup>1027</sup> During another speech he put forward an analogy about 'pure races' and others by comparing pure-bred dogs with pigs. He concluded that "pigs are normally stabbed."<sup>1028</sup> However, when the NSDAP tried to topple the Schieck government with referenda or votes of no confidence, Studentkowski was keen to emphasise that this was a move against the system and nothing personally against members of the government, who were "men of honour."<sup>1029</sup>

The 'neutral' Schieck government undermined the Republic with its reactionary policies. After the SA was banned in spring 1932, Schieck proposed that Berlin should simultaneously ban the *Reichsbanner*, the largest democratic organisation in support of the Republic<sup>1030</sup>. Furthermore, a government decree, which declared working-class sport organisations to be political, led to a ban on its

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<sup>1025</sup> Ibid., 42. Sitzung, 19.5.1931, p. 1543.

<sup>1026</sup> Ibid., p. 1568.

<sup>1027</sup> Ibid., 39. Sitzung, 28.4.1931, p. 1455.

<sup>1028</sup> Ibid., 62. Sitzung, 17.12.1931, p. 2615.

<sup>1029</sup> Ibid., 88. Sitzung, 18.10.1932, p. 3863. Before the referendum to bring down the government in early 1932 he explained: "When we proceed against the government of Schieck, it is by no means a fight against the persons who are part of the government" (ibid., 64. Sitzung, 26.1.1932, p. 2709).

<sup>1030</sup> Ibid., 69. Sitzung, 26.4.1932, p. 2921.

festivals, while bourgeois clubs were able to continue to celebrate publicly in autumn 1932.<sup>1031</sup>

Parliament became increasingly polarized. Two members of the WP joined the DNVP and one member of the DNVP, Fritsche, left the party in protest against their close co-operation with the NSDAP.<sup>1032</sup>

However, although the bourgeois parties drifted more and more to the right in the final years of the Republic, they continued to resist too much Nazi power and a 'Nazi take-over'. As we have already seen, this became clear during the elections of the president of the state parliament. In July 1930 all bourgeois parties followed the tradition that the largest faction in parliament should provide the president, and indirectly supported the Social Democrat Weckel as candidate by handing in blank ballot papers. The Democrats voted for Weckel. Only the NSDAP and KPD put forward their own candidates.<sup>1033</sup> The situation changed only four months later. In November 1930 the Social Democrat Weckel managed to be elected with just thirty-five votes, compared to thirty-four votes for Kunz, the candidate of the NSDAP.<sup>1034</sup> Again the KPD put forward its own candidate and the Democrats supported Weckel, however, this time the bourgeois was split. Some still stuck to tradition and handed in blank ballot papers (fourteen), but the majority supported the Nazi Kunz (twenty). The NSDAP's campaign to bring down Weckel<sup>1035</sup> failed just. However, as the bourgeois parties moved further to the

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<sup>1031</sup> Ibid., 88. Sitzung, 18.10.1932, pp. 3916-3917.

<sup>1032</sup> Ibid., 67. Sitzung, 18.2.1932, p. 2842.

<sup>1033</sup> Ibid., 1. Sitzung, 10.7.1930.

<sup>1034</sup> Ibid., 12. Sitzung, 13.11.1930.

<sup>1035</sup> E.g. see the article 'Weckel must resign! Never again Weckel as president of the state parliament' (FK, Nr. 205, 3.9.1931).

right they kept their distance from the NSDAP. At the end of 1931 Weckel was voted president again because the bourgeois parties put forward a candidate of the WP, and did not support the Nazi Kunz.<sup>1036</sup> The Nazis described the lack of support for their candidate as a "betrayal by the parties involved" and left parliament in protest.<sup>1037</sup> A year later the same seemed to happen when the bourgeois parties put forward Dr. Eckardt, a member of the DNVP, and the NSDAP put forward Kunz again. This time, however, even some Nazis supported Eckardt in the second ballot which secured his election as president with forty votes.<sup>1038</sup> In this respect, the representatives of the bourgeois parties were not prepared to give in to NSDAP pressure.

#### (vi) Conclusion

There were many direct contacts between Nazis and the bourgeoisie. Many bourgeois clubs, organisations, newspapers, parties, and even parts of the state administration, were infiltrated by the NSDAP. The staff in the sanatorium in Gottleuba (AH Pirna) used the Hitler salutation for greetings.<sup>1039</sup> Even the conservative Minister of the Interior, Richter, whose speeches were frequently applauded by the NSDAP<sup>1040</sup>, admitted the sympathetic attitude of the police towards the NSDAP in Chemnitz and Dresden.<sup>1041</sup>

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<sup>1036</sup> *VdSL*, 5. Wp, 59. Sitzung, 24.11.1931.

<sup>1037</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1038</sup> *Ibid.*, 89. Sitzung, 19.10.1932.

<sup>1039</sup> *Ibid.*, 69. Sitzung, 26.4.1932, p. 2953.

<sup>1040</sup> *Ibid.*, 70. Sitzung, 27.4.1932, p. 2975.

<sup>1041</sup> *Ibid.*, 62. Sitzung, 17.12.1931, p. 2599. See also the speech of the Social Democrat Gerlach (*ibid.*) and Böchel (*ibid.*, 69. Sitzung, 26.4.1932).

However, open sympathy for the NSDAP in Saxony, although it was increasing, was not all-embracing. More important was the fact that the growing acceptance of the NSDAP in bourgeois circles fostered the disintegration of the Republic. More than anything else, the Nazis' aggressive ideology found fertile soil in the bourgeoisie's conservative, reactionary, and often anti-democratic values.<sup>1042</sup> Many members of this conservative milieu, whether they specifically liked the Nazis or not, increasingly saw the NSDAP as the only party which was able to carry out the main task, i.e. to get rid of the Republican system and to create a new authoritarian state. Fritsche, a member of parliament who had left the DNVP because of its friendly line towards the NSDAP, described two cases in parliament where the Saxon judiciary and police acted with open sympathy towards the NSDAP. He concluded that an inquiry into these cases were pointless because a majority of the civil servants took the view that: "The National Socialist Party is a fine party, after all it is national. If someone uses the word national he immediately encounters favourable assessments by all other people who are nationalist too, and the police officer and the judge tell themselves: nationalist people cannot be criminals, these things are impossible among nationalist people ... The National Socialist Workers Party after all is a legal party!"<sup>1043</sup>

Opinion leaders and influential people in Saxony's bourgeois society frequently formed a 'united front' on the right with the NSDAP. The Prime Minister Schieck earned great applause from this group

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<sup>1042</sup> I disagree with Elliot, who played down the influence of the conservative milieu, when he argued that it was "highly doubtful" that activities of military organisations promoted 'militarist' attitudes, a glorification of war, or were prescriptions for future political actions (Elliot, 'Kriegervereine', p. 126).

<sup>1043</sup> VdSL, 5. Wp, 97. Sitzung, 12.1.1933, pp. 4255-4258.

when he demanded that Germany should have "equal rights with other nations and finally be freed from the *Tributfesseln* ... which our honour and conscience cannot bear any longer."<sup>1044</sup> The influential DNVP leader Siegert defended the DNVP's and NSDAP's attempts to bring down the democratically elected government by emphasising that those parties which led Germany into misery were "*Katastrophen-Parteien*" (parties aiming at a catastrophe) and not those parties which always warned about a catastrophe.<sup>1045</sup>

The function of the administration and decent codes of behaviour in society slowly fell apart in the final years of the Republic. A Nazi doctor in the AH Schwarzenberg refused to treat a pregnant women because he was on duty for the local Storm-troopers. He was not prosecuted for this.<sup>1046</sup> The SA leader Bennecke summarized the development of uncertainty and disintegration in a speech in parliament in late 1931: "Some things which are legal in one place are illegal in other places. At times one can get the impression that the Saxon administration is in the process of disintegration."<sup>1047</sup>

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<sup>1044</sup> Ibid., 64. Sitzung, 26.1.1932.

<sup>1045</sup> Ibid., 55. Sitzung, 11.7.1931, p. 2336.

<sup>1046</sup> Ibid., 70. Sitzung, 27.4.1932, p. 2970.

<sup>1047</sup> Ibid., 61. Sitzung, 16.12.1931, p. 2565.

## 12. Key study: the economic crisis and the effects of the Nazis' propaganda machine. The *Amtshauptmannschaft* Schwarzenberg between 1926 and 1933

### (i) Introduction

It is widely accepted that the economic depression and the collapse of the Weimar Republic stood in close relation to each other.<sup>1048</sup> Additionally, no historian would refute the link between the economic crisis and the growing support for the NSDAP from the late 1920s.<sup>1049</sup> However, although all the major regional studies about the rise of the NSDAP accept this, it is surprising how little they scrutinize this crucial background and do not attempt to establish a clear link between the growing depression and the rise of the Nazi movement.<sup>1050</sup>

Until recently, historians have also agreed that Nazi propaganda was essential in explaining the dramatic rise of the NSDAP's votes from around 800,000 to nearly fourteen million between 1928 and 1932. From 1925 onwards Hitler's main objective was to mobilize as many voters as possible to come to power through the ballot box. This strategy led the Nazis to build up a tight organizational network all over Germany through which the party developed a sophisticated mass mobilization machine which became more and more centrally controlled, authoritarian, and efficient. In his classic study about the Nazi Party Orlow regarded the twin bases of the

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<sup>1048</sup> H. James, 'Economic Reasons for the Collapse of the Weimar Republic', in I. Kershaw (ed.) *Weimar: Why did German Democracy Fail?* (London, 1990), p. 31.

<sup>1049</sup> Pridham, *Bavaria*, p. 215.

<sup>1050</sup> E.g. Pridham devoted a sub-chapter of nine pages to the economic crisis and mentioned the depression in one sentence in his conclusion (Pridham, *Bavaria*, pp. 215-224, 322.). Böhnke devoted seven pages to the impact of the economic depression and did not mention it in his conclusion (Böhnke, *Ruhrgebiet*), and Paul did not really discuss the background of the economic crisis (Paul, *Saargebiet*).



Nazis political success as skilful propaganda and effective organization<sup>1051</sup>, and Zeman wrote that the rise of the Nazis was "largely due to the skilful exploitation of propaganda techniques".<sup>1052</sup> Nearly a decade ago, however, Richard Bessel questioned the importance of the Nazis' propaganda machine for the first time. He called it a "myth" and argued that the Nazi electoral success was mainly explained by the social and political culture.<sup>1053</sup> Furthermore, Gerhard Paul concluded in his recent authoritative study about Nazi propaganda before 1933: "Propaganda was only one among several factors which explained the rise of the NSDAP. A large part of the NSDAP electorate did not have to be convinced by propaganda ... but voted for the party of Hitler independently from its propagandistic self-projection, longed for a saviour and projected their own desires into the NSDAP."<sup>1054</sup> It is useful to look at a smaller region in detail to investigate what roles the Nazis' relentless propaganda, the failure of their political opponents, and the increasing effects of the economic crisis played in swaying a majority of the local population to turn away from the Republic and to support the NSDAP in the final years of the Weimar era. The AH Schwarzenberg provides excellent conditions for such a key study. The district is the only Saxon *Amtshauptmannschaft* from which very detailed monthly police reports about the political

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1051 Orlow, *Nazi Party*, p. 5; also see Bracher *Dictatorship*, p. 129.

1052 Z. A. B. Zeman, *Nazi Propaganda* (1973), p. 32.

1053 R. Bessel, 'The Rise of the NSDAP and the Myth of Nazi Propaganda', *Wiener Library Bulletin*, 33 (1980), pp. 20-29. Also see I. Kershaw, 'Ideology, Propaganda and the Rise of the Nazi Party', in P. Stachura (ed.), *Hitlers Machtergreifung 1933* (London, 1983), p. 162. Additionally, it is surprising that historians seem to have neglected detailed analysis of election campaigns. One exception is J. Ciolek-Kümper, *Wahlkampf in Lippe. Die Wahlkampfpropaganda der NSDAP zur Landtagswahl am 15. Januar 1933* (München, 1976).

1054 G. Paul, *Aufstand der Bilder. Die NS-Propaganda vor 1933* (Bonn, 1990), p. 255.

and economic situation between 1926 and 1933 have survived almost completely. Furthermore, the AH Schwarzenberg was a typically densely populated and industrialised district in the Erzgebirge. Around 70 cent of its population were employed in industry and only 7.5 per cent in agriculture. Its 132,000 citizens produced various goods including machines, metal, enamel, men's wear, embroidery, paper, brushes, chemicals, paint, and wood carving.<sup>1055</sup> The Erzgebirge covered a substantial part of the electoral district of Chemnitz/Zwickau (see Map 1 on page 10 and Map 2 below), the stronghold of the Saxon Nazi movement and one of the party's greatest bastions in the *Reich*.

(ii) Comparatively tranquil years; the Nazis are the busiest activists on the political right (1926-1928)

1926, like the previous years, was a year of economic recession during which some factories had to shut down and many others had to introduce short-time work and cuts in salaries.<sup>1056</sup> The police reported in June 1926: "The unemployment has devastating effects on the workers. One can see the worries in all faces. Everyone asks himself where this is going to lead if it continues like this."<sup>1057</sup> The political situation was tense due to the referendum for the '*Fürstenenteignung*' in June and the state elections in October. The parties on the Left mobilized all their energies for both campaigns and outpaced all other political groups in their public appearance. The bourgeois parties only campaigned

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<sup>1055</sup> See 'Wirtschaftsbericht der Bezirksgruppe Westerzgebirge des Verbandes Sächsischer Industrieller', *SI*, Nr. 11, 12.3.1932, p. 127; *Der Gau Sachsen*, p. 10.

<sup>1056</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940, April 1926.

<sup>1057</sup> *Ibid.*, Juni 1926.

Map 2: Map of AH Schwarzenberg



shortly before the state elections and used their hold over the local press for their propaganda. The NSDAP was by far the busiest party on the right during the election campaign and, together with the KPD, the only party which campaigned for new support throughout the year (for the following discussion see Figures below). The Nazis had founded the district's first party branches in late 1923 and early 1924 in the free town of Aue (September 1923) and the town of Schwarzenberg (March 1924).<sup>1058</sup> From here they slowly spread into the Erzgebirge.

The NSDAP made some remarkable election gains in several small towns in the 1926 state elections (for election results see Figure 6 below). The results were linked with their local propaganda: In the twenty-nine places where the NSDAP did not hold a party meeting between November 1925 and October 1926 its average was 3.3 per cent of the vote.<sup>1059</sup> In the fourteen places where the Nazis held one to five meetings during the same period, its average vote was 7.3 per cent. The NSDAP won 23.8 per cent of the votes in Sosa, where it held three meetings, 17.8 per cent in Zschorlau (three meetings), 10.4 per cent in Lauter (six meetings), and 9.2 per cent in Niederschlema (two meetings). However, there were also a few

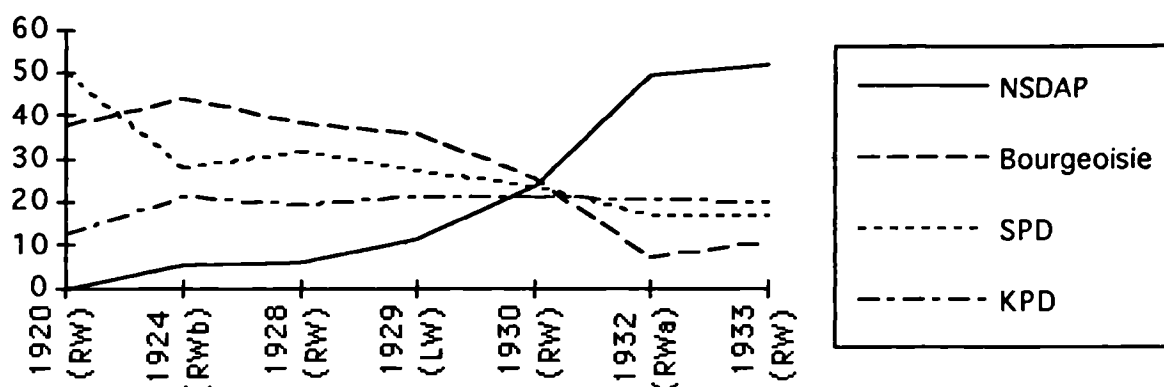
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<sup>1058</sup> *Erzgebirgischer Volksfreund*, Nr. 217, 16.9.1933; *NSDAP Schwarzenberg*, p. 10.

<sup>1059</sup> All election results are taken from the monthly police reports of the AH Schwarzenberg (STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940-1945), statistical publications (*StDR*, *StJbSa*), or newspapers between 1926-1933.

Figure 6:

Election results of political parties in the AH Schwarzenberg between  
1920-1933



	SPD	KPD	NSDAP	DNVP	DVP	DDP	WP	VRP
RW 1919	60.4							
RW 1920	49.7	12.4		13.1	18.2	6.5		
RW 1924b	28.0	21.3	5.0	19.3	15.0	4.0	5.6	
RP1925II*			56.2					
RW 1928	31.3	19.6	5.9	10.6	12.0	3.4	8.9	3.2 SLV
LW 1929	27.5	21.3	11.4	8.0	12.0	1.8	11.2	3.1 SLV
LW 1930	24.9	20.1	20.3	3.9	5.8	1.4	8.1	
RW 1930	23.8	21.4	23.9	4.0	3.8	1.3	5.6	10.6ChSV
RP1932II**			51.0					
RW 1932a	16.6	20.5	49.1	4.1	0.8	0.5	0.7	4.9ChSV
RW 1932b	17.5	23.2	46.8	3.7	1.0	0.4	0.7	5.2ChSV
RW 1933	16.8	19.9	51.9	5.0	0.8	0.3		4.7ChSV

	eligible to vote	voting participation
1928	84141	77.1 per cent
1929	86235	76.7 per cent
LW 1930	85567	72.0 per cent
RW 1930	86004	85.3 per cent
RW 1932a	91087	91.2 per cent
RW 1932b	88662	87.4 per cent
RW 1933	89084	92.9 per cent

\*: percentage for Hindenburg in the second ballot in the 1925 Presidential elections; \*\*: percentage for Hitler in the second ballot in the 1932 Presidential elections.

Source: *StDR*, (1919-1933); STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940-1945.

places where the Nazis achieved good election results without holding a single meeting after the re-creation of the party. For example the Nazis won 9 per cent of the vote in the village of Schönheiderhammer. Schönheiderhammer, however, was only a mile away from Eibenstock, where the NSDAP had organised four meetings since late 1925. A striking feature of this election campaign was that the prominent Nazis Gregor Strasser, Himmler and Dietrich spoke at two meetings each of the total fourteen NSDAP election meetings held in the district. Hitler had ordered all party speakers to participate in the Saxon elections.<sup>1060</sup> Stier, a former Communist and locksmith, spoke at all other meetings.<sup>1061</sup> The party's propaganda headquarters in Munich already controlled and approved the propaganda leaflets which were designed by the Saxon Nazis for the campaign.<sup>1062</sup>

The economic situation and the mood of the population improved in the AH Schwarzenberg between 1927 and 1928. The police recorded in summer 1927 that "the business of industry and trade continuous to be good."<sup>1063</sup> Politically the atmosphere was quiet too. The campaign for the May 1928 *Reichstag* elections was short and peaceful. The bourgeois parties organised only a few badly attended meetings shortly before the elections. The DVP attracted eleven visitors to their meeting in Waschleithe, the DDP's meeting in Lössnitz was cancelled because only eight interested people

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<sup>1060</sup> BA, NS 18, Nr. 5022, 8.9.1926.

<sup>1061</sup> Except one meeting by the ex-Communist Künnemann (STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940, Oktober 1926).

<sup>1062</sup> BA, NS 18, Nr. 5022, Himmler, 8.10.1926.

<sup>1063</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1941, August 1927.

turned up, and the *Volksrechtspartei* could attract only nineteen people to a meeting in Eibenstock.<sup>1064</sup>

Underneath the surface of tranquillity, however, several problems accumulated. Some sectors of industry continued to face recession and their situation worsened at the end of 1928. Farmers complained about their tax burden; one cardboard factory, two clothing factories and five leather gloves factories were temporarily forced to shut down; several embroidery factories faced problems, and innkeepers complained about a lack of customers. In the fall of 1928 the police stated that "industry is in the middle of a crisis which will affect all thriving industrial sectors in the end."<sup>1065</sup> Furthermore, the anti-Democratic NSDAP had become the most active political party beside the KPD. A net of NSDAP branches covered the fifty-two villages and towns of the district in early 1928 (Eibenstock, Johanngeorgenstadt, Lauter, Pöhla, Raschau, Rittersgrün, Sosa and Schwarzenberg<sup>1066</sup>).

The strong link between the Nazis' appearance in public meetings and their local election showings continued in the May 1928 *Reichstag* election. In the twelve places where the NSDAP organised between one and four meetings between November 1926 and May 1928, the party gained an average of 9.2 per cent of the votes (compared to its average of 5.9). It is striking that the small towns where the NSDAP organised most meetings in the district correspondingly brought the greatest share of votes. The NSDAP gained 19.5 per cent of the votes in Zschorlau where it had staged three meetings since late 1926, 16.4 per cent in Pöhla (three

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<sup>1064</sup> Ibid., Mai 1928.

<sup>1065</sup> Ibid., March, April, June, September 1928.

<sup>1066</sup> NSDAP Schwarzenberg, p. 16.

meetings), 15.5 per cent in Sosa (four meetings) and 12.5 per cent in Lauter (three meetings). In the thirty-six places where the NSDAP had not organised a single public meeting during that period the party only scored an average of 3.7 per cent of the votes. During the years when the Nazi movement was still comparatively small, one public meeting by the NSDAP could make all the difference. In May 1928 the party gained an average vote of 7.0 per cent in all nineteen villages and small towns of the AH Schwarzenberg where it had organised at least one public meeting since November 1925.

The local Nazis, as on the national level<sup>1067</sup>, mouthed mainly anti-Marxist slogans and above all, tried to appeal to workers before and during the 1928 *Reichstag* campaign. Their main target was the SPD. From 1927 onwards the *NSFS*'s column 'letter from Sosa' reported about the Marxist stronghold and its SPD mayor Hille and vilified it as the epitome of Marxist corruption. The Nazis, who nicknamed Hille 'Isidor'<sup>1068</sup>, accused the Social Democrat of "mismanagement", "building a luxury home", "neglecting the unemployed", "corruption", and called for all "brain and hand workers" ('*Arbeiter der Stirn und Faust*') to join the NSDAP.<sup>1069</sup> The Nazis frequently allied with Communists in town councils to attack Social Democratic maladministration or to underline their support for the unemployed. In Raschau the NSDAP and KPD fought together against the SPD mayor with the result that the local

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<sup>1067</sup> The NSDAP's central election slogan was 'break the Dawes chains' (Paul *NS-Propaganda*, pp. 84-85).

<sup>1068</sup> After the chief of the Berlin criminal police, Dr. Bernhard Weiß, a Jew, who became Goebbels' scapegoat in Berlin under the nickname 'Isidor' (H. Heiber, *Goebbels* (New York, 1972), pp. 62-63).

<sup>1069</sup> *NSFS*, Nr. 4, 23.1.1927; *ibid.*, Nr. 7, 13.12.1927; *ibid.*, Nr. 14, 3.4.1927.



bourgeoisie regarded the Nazis as a radical workers party.<sup>1070</sup> In Aue the NSDAP "unreservedly supported" a Communist motion in the town councils for winter aid for the unemployed.<sup>1071</sup> Furthermore, the local Nazis were 'proud' that they had former members of the soldier councils and Marxists in their ranks<sup>1072</sup>, and organised a meeting to discuss the lockout of metal workers<sup>1073</sup>.

At the same time, however, the Nazis never neglected the middle classes. In February 1928 they organised a meeting in Schwarzenberg: "The new department store in Schwarzenberg - the ruin of small business and craftsmen."<sup>1074</sup> The Nazis were extremely anti-Marxist and stressed that they wanted to unite all classes in a new and strong Germany.<sup>1075</sup> Anti-Marxism and their strong emphasis on the fatherland and patriotism made the Nazis acceptable to the middle classes. An early Nazi activist and later branch leader from Raschau was appointed to lead the bureau of the local newspaper *Erzgebirgischer Volksfreund* in Schwarzenberg because of his "nationalistic attitude".<sup>1076</sup> Lastly, most NSDAP activists came from the middle classes.<sup>1077</sup> Most bourgeois parties rejected electoral alliances with the NSDAP until

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1070 BDC, Pillmayer, 'NSDAP Raschau', p. 2.

1071 *FK*, Nr. 104, 2.12.1930.

1072 *NSfS*, Nr. 18, 6.5.1928.

1073 *Ibid.*, Nr. 10, 6.3.1927.

1074 STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1941, Februar 1928.

1075 *NSfS*, Nr. 25, 19.6.1927.

1076 BDC, Pillmayer, 'NSDAP Raschau', p. 2.

1077 The first four members of the NSDAP in Schwarzenberg were machine operator Emil Lippold, accountant Karl Lehmann, shop assistant Paul Beck and accountant Walter Weissflog (December 1923). The founding members of the party branch in March 1924 were (three of eight members) master builder Walter Ring, machine operator Emil Lippold, post assistant Möckel (*NSDAP Schwarzenberg*, p. 10). The early leaders of the NSDAP in Aue were the engraver Franz Pillmayer and Dr. Hirt. Also see footnote 1111.

the late 1920s. However, when the Nazis began to win more seats in local councils, state and national elections, more and more middle class parties looked for co-operation with the NSDAP. The WP in Aue offered the local Nazis an electoral alliance before the 1928 *Reichstag* elections<sup>1078</sup>, and the co-operation of the bourgeois parties and NSDAP in Raschau secured a bourgeois majority in the town in early 1930.<sup>1079</sup>

(iii) The crisis begins to hit the population; the NSDAP becomes the most active of all political parties (1929-1930)

The economic situation continued to deteriorate in 1929 (see Figures 7 and 8 below). In fall the police reported high food prices, persistent unemployment, a depressed atmosphere among the population, the miserable situation of those who depended on social benefits, and one suicide because of the economic depression.<sup>1080</sup> One indication of the worsening state of the economy was the fact that an increasing number of Saxons used the closeness to Czechoslovakia to buy goods which were cheaper than in Germany.<sup>1081</sup> The AH Schwarzenberg, like ten other *Amtshauptmannschaften*, were bordering Czechoslovakia. Local people made more and more trips across the border to enjoy

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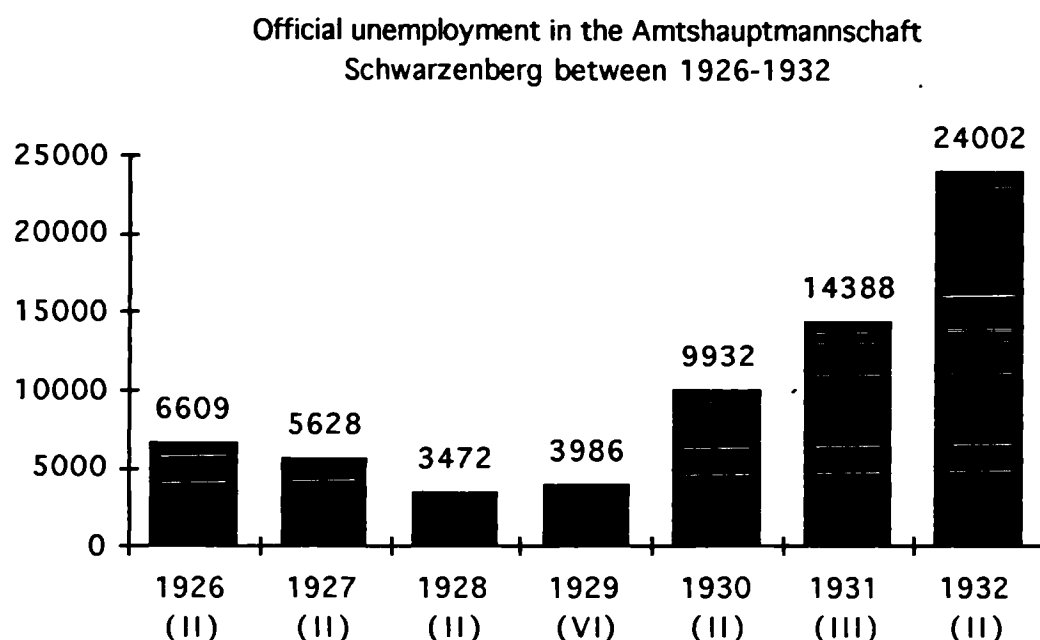
<sup>1078</sup> NSfS, Nr. 19, 13.5.1928.

<sup>1079</sup> BDC, Pillmayer, 'NSDAP Raschau', pp. 5-6.

<sup>1080</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1942, September-Oktober 1929.

<sup>1081</sup> A price comparison of basic foodstuffs in Saxony and Czechoslovakia at the end of 1929: a pound of bread: 0.19 *Reichsmark* (Saxony)/0.16 *Reichsmark* (Czechoslovakia); butter: 2.30-2.50/2.10; potatoes: 0.04-0.05/0.03; a litre milk: 0.38-0.40/0.35; one egg: 0.16-0.20/0.12; a pound of beef: 1.20-1.60/0.90-1.10; a pound of pork: 1.40-1.60/1.30; a pound of veal: 1.40-1.60/1.30; a pound of sausage: 1.40-1.80/1.20-1.60 (*ibid.*, Dezember 1929).

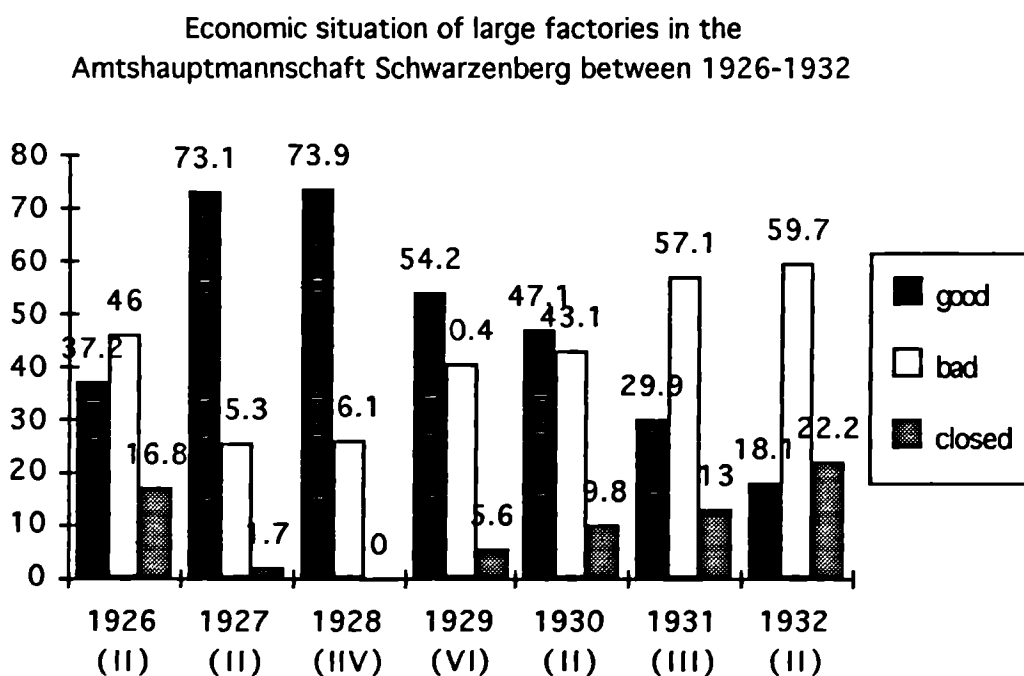
Figure 7:



Percentage of official unemployment: 1926 (II): 8.8; 1927 (II): 7.5; 1928 (II): 4.6; 1929 (VI): 5.3; 1930 (II): 13.3; 1931 (III): 19.2; 1932 (II): 32.1 (month in brackets).

Source: 1926-29: STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940-1942; 1930-32: *Der Arbeitsmarkt in Sachsen*.

Figure 8:



Note: The data for the graph is based on percentage for each year (month in brackets). Source: STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940-1945.

considerably cheaper drinks and food in Czech pubs and restaurants.<sup>1082</sup> Local tailors complained that people used their Czech competitors because of their cheaper material and working costs.<sup>1083</sup> Shoe-makers were upset that people brought their shoes to repair or bought new ones across the border.<sup>1084</sup> Farmers lamented that door-to-door-salesmen sold cheap Czech food, like eggs, in the region.<sup>1085</sup> Tobacco traders complained that people did not buy loose cigarettes any more but bought whole packages across the border<sup>1086</sup>. The great misery and specific problems of the border region became evident when the parliament in Dresden discussed the topic in several sessions between late 1930 and early 1933.<sup>1087</sup> The VSI too, frequently attempted to make the Berlin government aware of Saxony's particular problems and called one initiative "Saxony's misery - Borderland misery".<sup>1088</sup>

A representative of the Saxon government painted a gloomy picture in an emergency meeting of the VSI about Saxony's economic crisis in early 1931: "A particularly unfavourable situation exists in the regions which border with Czechoslovakia. The predominant industries, like musical instruments, *Posamenten*, timber, and the toy industry, go beyond the border of the *Reich*. The competition in the immediate vicinity is able to substantially undercut its Saxon neighbours due to more favourable conditions of

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1082 Ibid., Juni 1929.

1083 Ibid., Oktober 1929.

1084 Ibid., Nr. 1944, March 1931.

1085 Ibid.

1086 Ibid., April 1931.

1087 VdSL, 5 Wp, 16. Sitzung, 27.11.1930; ibid., 22. Sitzung, 15.1.1931; ibid., 43. Sitzung, 21.5.1931; ibid., 104. Sitzung, 14.2.1933.

1088 SI, Nr. 8, 21.2.1931, p. 142. The VSI complained that the Czech shoe producer Batas imported more than three million pair of shoes to Germany, mainly to Saxony, in 1928 (ibid., Nr. 33, 1930, p. 755).

production in Czechoslovakia, lower taxes and wages, the usual undercutting of the eight-hour day, etc. This particularly attracts skilled workers and increasingly causes Saxon employers to close Saxon factories to re-build them on the other side of the border. Craft and retail trade are nearly totally wiped out because the population keeps itself in good supply in Czech' border towns ... The Saxon border region becomes more and more deserted."<sup>1089</sup>

The particular problems for local industries due to Czech competition led to legislation which aimed to limit this. However, the people continued to be able to buy goods, though in limited quantities, until the end of the Weimar era.<sup>1090</sup> Furthermore, from the late 1920s there was an increase of the smuggling of goods like shoes, leather goods, laces, gloves, and tobacco products from Czechoslovakia to Saxony, which was difficult to control.<sup>1091</sup>

The local Nazis made a decisive breakthrough in 1929. Between 1.-10. March their district participated in a propaganda campaign in which eighty-four public meetings were organised in Saxony by the headquarters in Plauen in co-operation with the NSDAP's propaganda headquarters in Munich.<sup>1092</sup> The Saxon leadership initiated the campaign, organised the distribution of all speakers, and designed and printed some of the leaflets.<sup>1093</sup> Heinrich Himmler, who was in charge of the NSDAP's propaganda headquarters in Munich, organised the allocation of national party

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<sup>1089</sup> 'Sachsen braucht Arbeit!', *ibid.*, Nr. 31, 1931, p. 93.

<sup>1090</sup> In April 1932 the people who lived in the border region were able to buy a limited amount of food tax-free on two weekdays. This was then restricted to one weekday from 1.5.1932 onwards (STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1945, Mai 1932).

<sup>1091</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 1942, Dezember 1929.

<sup>1092</sup> *SB*, Nr. 9, 3.3.1929; *BA*, NS 18, Nr. 5022.

<sup>1093</sup> *BA*, NS 18, Nr. 5022.

speakers, supplied the *Gau* with leaflets, and had the final say about the content of the leaflets.<sup>1094</sup> The organisation of the campaign took exactly one-and-a-half months and was complicated because several of the speakers from outside Saxony became ill and had to be replaced. The Nazis in the AH Schwarzenberg held public meetings in five different villages and towns and followed up the campaign with several more meetings. The party branch in Aue organised five meetings with the prominent speakers Dauser, Münchmeyer, Friedrich, Kunz and Killinger and several meetings in the surrounding area. Feder, Loepich and Friedrich spoke in Eibenstock and the local branch organised several meetings in surrounding villages too.<sup>1095</sup> The success was immediate and the Saxon Nazis urged their headquarters in Munich to send them a big batch of membership application forms which were in demand from all areas of the state.<sup>1096</sup>

As in other parts of Saxony, the local bourgeois press assisted the NSDAP. In early 1929 the *SB* openly praised the local press for their contribution to the preparations for a Strasser meeting in Schwarzenberg/Erzgebirge: "Newspaper articles in the local press and the well known red placards announced the appearance of our party colleague Strasser days and weeks in advance ... It has to be emphasized that the local press accepted our reports either shortened or in full."<sup>1097</sup>

Soon afterwards the court of justice decided that new state elections had to be held and the Saxon parliament agreed on 12 May. At this point NSDAP headquarters in Munich and Plauen

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<sup>1094</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1095</sup> *SB*, Nr. 15, 14.4.1929.

<sup>1096</sup> BA, SISch, Nr. 208, Plauen an München, 29.4.1929.

<sup>1097</sup> See 'Straßer in Schwarzenberg', *SB*, Nr. 8, 24.2.1929.

quickly organised a spectacular propaganda campaign with national and local speakers. The party leadership took the Saxon state election very seriously. Gregor Strasser announced: "This election will be regarded as a barometer of the atmosphere among the population far beyond the borders of Saxony."<sup>1098</sup> Moreover, the Nazis hoped that an electoral increase would make them the decisive force in the middle of the Saxon parliament.<sup>1099</sup> This time the organization of speakers was decided at a special meeting which was headed by Gregor Strasser in Plauen in early April. Each national party speaker was assigned to speak at a specific number of meetings. It seems that local party branches, even small ones, participated in the determination of the speakers and asked for their favourite speaker on the list. The propaganda headquarters of the *Gau* informed the speakers where and roughly when to speak.<sup>1100</sup> Once the local branches received their instructions, they contacted the speakers directly and negotiated the exact details. For example Heinrich Himmler had to speak ten times during the campaign, including small villages. Speakers were able to choose the topic of the meeting and, if a meeting place was not already hired for a specific date, sometimes even the date.

Between 19 April and the election day on 12 May the NSDAP staged thirty-five public meetings in the AH Schwarzenberg alone. Kunz from Zwickau spoke at nine meetings, and eleven speakers from outside Saxony (Kube, Himmler, Hinkel, Mossakowsky, Engel, Goering, Dauser, Wohlleben, Oberlindober, Hinkel and Strobel) spoke at twenty meetings. The Nazis also campaigned in a one day

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<sup>1098</sup>SB, Nr. 19, 12.5.1929.

<sup>1099</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1100</sup> BA, NS 18, Nr. 5022.

propaganda tour with several lorries full of storm-troopers, mainly from Zwickau. They handed out leaflets and party speakers gave short speeches in the middle of market squares.<sup>1101</sup>

The Nazis fought their campaign not on issues specific to Saxony, but argued that there was no remedy for the misery in Saxony and that only a fundamental change in the whole system could bring an improvement.<sup>1102</sup> The leaflets were nationally used NSDAP leaflets. Some of them had a note about the state elections at the bottom.<sup>1103</sup> Already in late 1928 Himmler told a local activist that it was impossible for the party's propaganda headquarters to consider specific regional features.<sup>1104</sup> The NSDAP tried to attract the working class and middle class during the election. The local Nazis noticeably stepped up their campaigns to woo the middle classes after the May 1928 elections. In June 1928 the Nazis in Aue campaigned against department stores and for the protection of the middle classes<sup>1105</sup>, in September of that year the Nazis spoke about the 'awakened middle classes'<sup>1106</sup>, and in summer 1929 the Nazis concentrated on the disastrous effects of the economic crisis for middle class business men and attempted to win members of the WP<sup>1107</sup>.

The enormous propaganda and the increasing economic crisis in the Erzgebirge paid off. The NSDAP doubled its electorate from 5.9 per cent in mid-1928 to 11.4 per cent in the AH Schwarzenberg in May 1929 (the party's average was 1.6 and 5.0 per cent in Saxony). The

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<sup>1101</sup>SB, Nr. 16, 21.4.1929. Also see *NSFS*, Nr. 23, 10.6.1928.

<sup>1102</sup>SB, Nr. 19, 12.5.1929.

<sup>1103</sup>BA, SlSch, Nr. 208, München an Plauen, 26.4.1929.

<sup>1104</sup>BA, NS 18, Nr. 5004, Himmler, 13.12.1928.

<sup>1105</sup>SB, Nr. 24, 17.6.1928.

<sup>1106</sup>Ibid., Nr. 39, 30.9.1928.

<sup>1107</sup>Ibid., Nr. 29, 21.7.1929.



Nazis gained 21.2 per cent of the vote in Eibenstock, 13.2 per cent in Schwarzenberg, and 12.0 per cent in Aue. These were their strongholds in the region and places where they had campaigned most. Mutschmann thanked Himmler in a personal letter for his contribution to the "success, which was expected, but nevertheless surprising in its proportion."<sup>1108</sup>

The propaganda campaigns in the first half of the year and the following election success was the 'take off' for the local NSDAP. After several quiet months during the summer vacations the NSDAP completely outpaced all other parties in its propaganda activities and organised more political meetings and attracted more participants than all other parties combined from September 1929 onwards (this did not change until March 1933; see Figures 9-12 below). The occasion for this was provided by the campaigns of radical rights for the referendum against the Young plan from September onwards and for the local elections in November. The campaign against the Young Plan was followed with particular interest by the population. The police noted that "even among the working classes voices were heard that Germany cannot fulfil the payment plan for such a long time"<sup>1109</sup> The NSDAP, except for one DNVP meeting in Schneeberg, was the only party in the district which campaigned for the referendum on the Young Plan and organised twenty-three meetings around that topic. Twenty-one point six per cent of the local population voted in favour of the campaign on 22 December. It was striking again that the Nazis did well in places where they held most public meetings. They

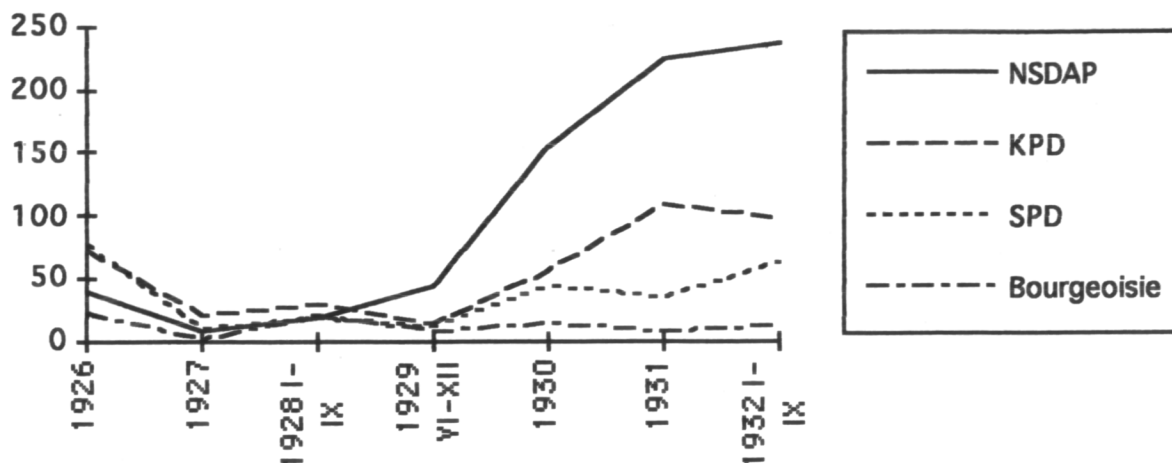
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<sup>1108</sup> BA, NS 18, Nr. 5022, Mutschmann an Himmler, 18.5.1929.

<sup>1109</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1943, Februar 1930.

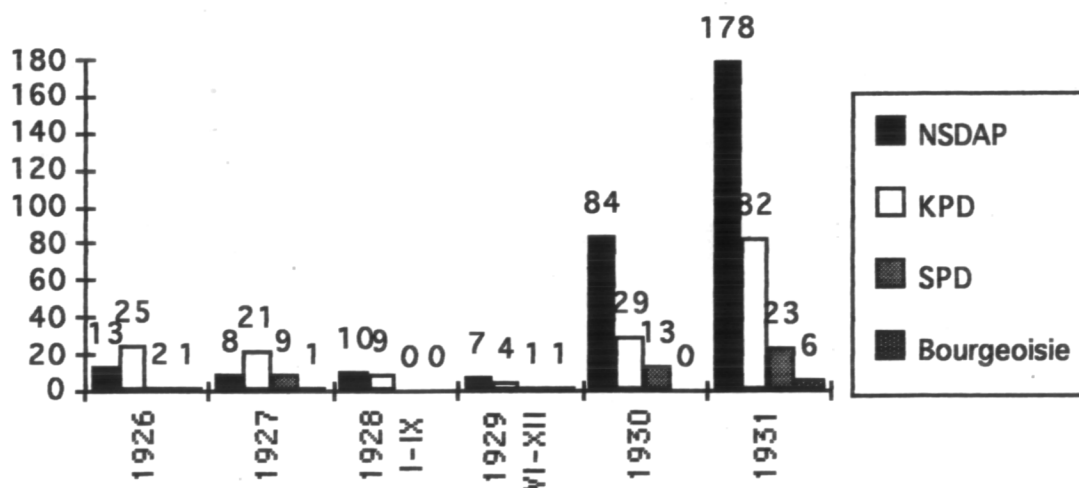
**Figure 9:**

The number of public meetings of political parties in the AH Schwarzenberg between 1926-1932



**Figure 10:**

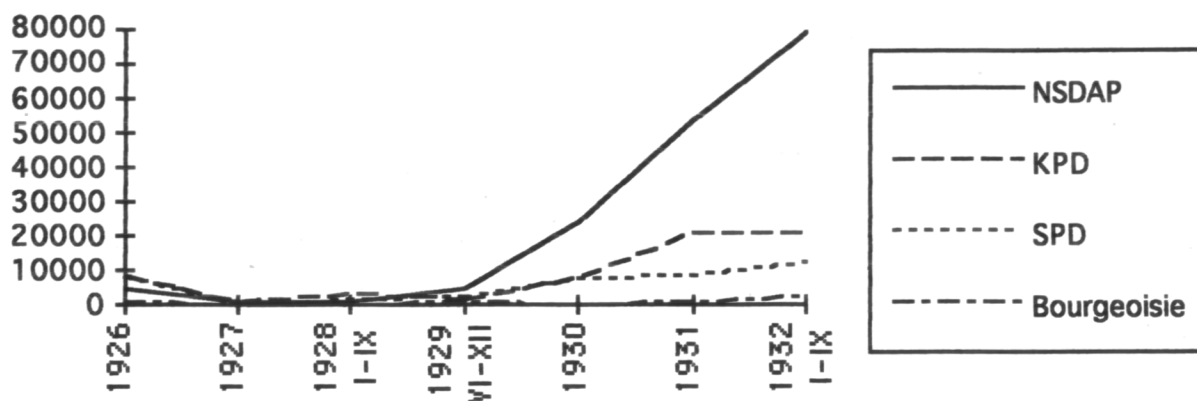
The number of meetings of political parties outside election campaigns (including referenda) in the AH Schwarzenberg between 1926-1931



Source: STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1941-1945.

**Figure 11:**

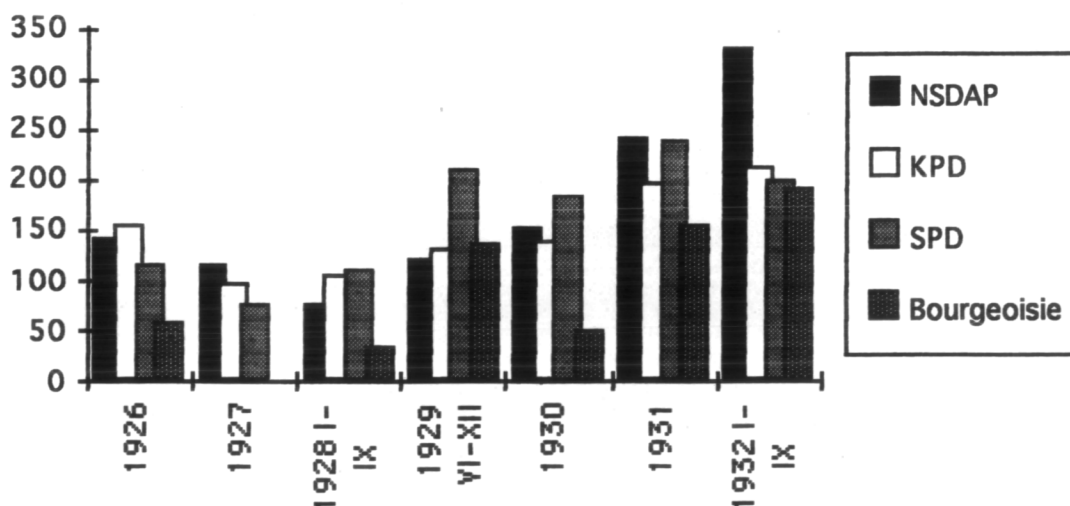
**The number of participants at public meetings of political parties in the AH Schwarzenberg between 1926-1932**



Source: STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1941-1945.

**Figure 12:**

**The average number of participants at public meetings of political parties in the AH Schwarzenberg between 1926-32**



Source: STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, 1941-1945.

organised six meetings in Eibenstock between June and December 1929 and 30.8 per cent of the population voted in favour of the Young campaign. Four meetings in Zschorlau were rewarded by 34.8 per cent of the vote. Many people in the villages around Aue voted in favour of the referendum (Grüna: 86.0%, Dittersdorf: 38.1%, Oberpfannenstiel: 31.2%, Oberschlema: 25.2%, Niederschlema: 21.6%, Lössnitz: 17.4%).

The new member of the Saxon parliament and leading figure of the Saxon NSDAP, Erich Kunz from Zwickau, was the key figure for the spread of the movement in the AH Schwarzenberg.<sup>1110</sup> Relentlessly he helped to build up the local movement and spoke at thirty-one meetings between mid-1926 and mid-1930 in the AH Schwarzenberg. The sudden increase of NSDAP meetings from 1929 onwards was brought about by Kunz and a small number of local speakers, by three members of the Saxon state parliament (Cuno Meyer, Dr. Fritsch and Killinger), and very importantly (see further below), by prominent Nazi speakers from outside Saxony. At the district's 156 public meetings held by the NSDAP between February 1929 and June 1930 Kunz spoke twenty-two times, Horn from Eibenstock ten times, the local teacher Göpfert nine times, Weissflog from Schwarzenberg seven times, Hartwig from Zwickau six times, Cuno Meyer six times, and Dr. Fritsch and Killinger both four times. The core of extremely active local speakers was crucial for the Nazis' propaganda. Between 1926 and July 1932, nine local speakers spoke at 274 (more than one-third) of a total of 765

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<sup>1110</sup> *NSDAP Schwarzenberg*, pp. 12, 15. Kunz was born on 16.12.1897 in Vielau/ AH Zwickau. He joined the NSDAP in 1922. In 1929 he became district leader of Zwickau and NSDAP member of the Saxon parliament (*Stockhorst, 5000 Köpfe*).

public meetings.<sup>1111</sup> Furthermore, local speakers like Weissflog and Horn started to speak in Communist strongholds like Bermsgrün, Breitenbrunn, and Mittweida.<sup>1112</sup>

In 1930 the economic situation and the political atmosphere deteriorated rapidly. The Communists and Nazis used every opportunity to fight each other and the first serious clashes between the police and unemployed demonstrators took place early that year.<sup>1113</sup> Innkeepers, small business men, craftsmen and hawkers complained about bad business<sup>1114</sup>, and more and more gloomy reports about depressed industries were compiled: in Schneeberg the toy and embroidery industry had completely collapsed because of lack of orders; in Eibenstock the production of beadwork and *Buntstickerei* nearly ceased; the people in Bernsbach expected a total collapse of the economy; the crisis continued in Lössnitz and worsened considerably in Schwarzenberg, and bad business was reported in Rittersgrün, in Schönheide and in the villages around Aue.<sup>1115</sup> The economic deterioration coincided with another state election in June 1930 and the police observed irritation among the citizens: "Because of the confusing state of the economy the majority of the population has its doubts which party they should follow."<sup>1116</sup>

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1111 Kunz (51 meetings, shop assistant, Zwickau, MdL), Göpfert (46, teacher), Horn (43, draughtsman, Eibenstock, MdR), Weissflog (31, Schwarzenberg/AH Schwarzenberg), Schuster (27, medical doctor, Aue), Lindner (28, headmaster, Lauter/AH Schwarzenberg), Wegner (19, Dr., Kirchberg/AH Zwickau), Hartwig (17, builder, AH Bautzen), and Engel (12, Dr., Werdau/AH Zwickau) (STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940-1945).

1112 *NSDAP Schwarzenberg*, p. 25.

1113 STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1943, März 1930.

1114 *Ibid.*, Februar, Juni 1930.

1115 *Ibid.*, März, Mai, August, Oktober 1930.

1116 *Ibid.*, Juli 1930.

The NSDAP thrived in these conditions. The police recorded in the weeks before the state elections: "The NSDAP's membership number is rising ... Particularly active were the National Socialists whose uniformed members appeared in considerable numbers in the villages. They gave speeches in public in which they praised their party as the one which will restore their fatherland again."<sup>1117</sup> The Nazis also continued to woo the supporters of the traditional Marxist parties and the unemployed. In Early 1930 they organised a meeting for unemployed in Aue<sup>1118</sup>, and shortly before the elections they appealed to "all honestly fighting working-class members" who traditionally supported the KPD to vote for them.<sup>1119</sup>

While the number of participants in NSDAP meetings continuously increased from 1928 onwards, the bourgeois parties were not able to attract large crowds even during their few meetings before elections. The DNVP's meeting in Lauter had to be cancelled because only five people turned up in June 1930, and only twelve visitors attended the election meeting of the DVP in Bernsbach in September 1930.<sup>1120</sup> Particularly striking, in contrast to this, was the continuous increase of participants to NSDAP meetings compared to other parties (see Figures 9-12). By 1932 the Nazis attracted more than twice as many participants to their public meetings (78,752 between January-September 1932) than all other parties combined (35,826).

The Nazis electoral performance in a village or town was still linked with their local propaganda. It is striking that of the nine villages

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<sup>1117</sup> Ibid., Juni 1930.

<sup>1118</sup> SB, Nr. 8, 23.2.1930.

<sup>1119</sup> Ibid., Nr. 94, 15.6.1930.

<sup>1120</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1943, Juni, September 1930.

where the NSDAP remained below 14.4 per cent (NSDAP's average in Saxony) in the June 1930 state elections, five were small villages where the NSDAP had not organised a single public meeting since November 1925 (Jugel, Markersbach, Neuheide, Tellerhäuser, Wittigsthal). Places in which the Nazis held most public meetings in the twelve months before the state elections brought them election results above the average of 20.3 per cent for the AH.: the NSDAP gained 27.8 per cent of the vote in Eibenstock where it had organised ten meetings, 27.6 per cent in Niederschlema (nine meetings), 24.3 per cent in Lauter and 21.3 per cent in Zschorlau (both eight meetings).

It was crucial that the local Nazis were able to attract thirty-seven prominent national party leaders from outside Saxony - among them were Feder, Münchmeyer, and Gregor Strasser<sup>1121</sup> - to speak in seventy-five of altogether 242 meetings in their district between 1926 and June 1930. Prominent Nazis pulled the crowds before June 1930 and laid the foundation for the spread of the local Nazi movement. Striking examples were a Feder meeting in Lauter with 600 visitors in early 1926, a Buttmann meeting with 300 participants in Zschorlau in November 1929, and a Münchmeyer meeting in Eibenstock with 750 visitors in March 1930. Between

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<sup>1121</sup> Albrecht (Dr., Altenburg, 6), Buttmann (Munich, 2), Brückner (Gauleiter, Silesia, 1), Dauser (Munich, 7), Dietrich (MdR, 4), Dreher (MdR, 1), Engel (Berlin, 2), Feder (MdR, 1), Frank (Berlin, 1), Friedrich (Munich, 3), Professor Gregor (Weimar, 2), Göring (MdR, 2), Gugel (Nuremberg, 1) Haage (MdL, Prussia, 1) Himmler (Landshut, 3), Hinkel (Berlin, 1), Hüttmann (MdL Hamburg, 1), Kerl (MdL, 1), Köhler (MdL, Baden, 1), Krause (Munich, 1), Krüger (Halle, 1), Kube (1), Kunze (Berlin, 3), Loeper (Dessau, 1), Lütt (Braunschweig, 1), Mergenthaler (Stuttgart, 1), Mossakowsky (Berlin, 2), Münchmeyer (2), Oberlindober (5), Roth (MdL Baden, 1), Sauckel (1), Schemm (3), Stöhr (MdR, 1), Gregor Strasser (Landshut, MdR, 5), Wohlleben (Gera, 5), and Zippel (MdL, Munich, 1). AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940-1942; NSDAP Schwarzenberg, pp. 24-25. MdR: member of *Reichstag*; MdL: member of state parliament; the figure indicates how often they spoke.

1926 and the June 1930 state elections these prominent Nazis attracted an average of 168 people to their meetings in the region, while Saxon Nazi speakers were only able to attract an average of 97 people to their meetings. During that time nearly forty per cent of all NSDAP visitors heard a speech of what was often a prominent Nazi from outside Saxony. After prominent Nazi speakers had boosted the local NSDAP in all major campaigns before the June 1930 election campaign, the local Nazis were able to continue the momentum with their own speakers and a rapidly growing number of activists. After Erich Kunz successfully built up the district from nearby Zwickau until 1930, Horn from Eibenstock, who became a member of the *Reichstag* in September 1930, became the party's most important speaker in the district. Horn spoke at forty-three meetings before July 1932. Franz Pillmayer became another important local Nazi leader. He was branch leader from Aue, was appointed to the *Reichstag* in September 1930, and became leader of the district in early 1931.

Between the June 1930 state elections and the September 1930 *Reichstag* elections the NSDAP increased its electorate from 20.3 per cent to 23.9 per cent. Again they had campaigned on national issues, arguing that a "decision in the Reich" was a "clarification in Saxony."<sup>1122</sup> The main motto of the local Nazis, "Away with the Young Reichstag", matched the national campaign. Although the working class was the main target at national level<sup>1123</sup>, the topics of the meetings were not specifically organised to attract workers. In the Nazis' fifty-one election meetings there was only one which

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<sup>1122</sup> FK, Nr. 24, 24.8.1930.

<sup>1123</sup> Paul, *NS-Propaganda*, p. 92.



tried to appeal directly to workers (and also farmers), and only three 'against the corrupt marxist system'.

The economic situation was becoming desperate at the end of the year. The Nazis warned that "a catastrophe was imminent in the Erzgebirge."<sup>1124</sup> The police reported a "very depressed mood" among the population in November that year and elaborated: "The number of unemployed grows more and more. The long term unemployment worsened and caused the impoverishment of many families who can only barley dress themselves and are in debt. The acquisition of firewood, potatoes and clothes for the coming winter causes particular difficulties."<sup>1125</sup> Additionally, there were rumours and fears of severe political disturbances in the winter in the face of a helpless police.<sup>1126</sup>

The Nazis continued to flood the district with an increasing number of well attended meetings in which they attacked the political system, the government, and particularly the SPD, which they blamed for the bad economic situation in Germany because of its *Erfüllungspolitik*.<sup>1127</sup> In December the police observed: "The atmosphere among the population regarding politics is tense and strained. Many people mention that only a National Socialist government can create healthy and orderly conditions."<sup>1128</sup>

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<sup>1124</sup> FK, Nr. 35, 10.9.1930.

<sup>1125</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1943, November 1930.

<sup>1126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1128</sup> Ibid., Dezember 1930.

(iv) Economic collapse and despair; the Nazis dominate the agenda (1931-1933)

Although 1931 was a year of no major elections, the political atmosphere became more and more radicalised. Physical clashes seemed imminent. Small troops of NSDAP, SPD, KPD patrolled in Eibenstock, and there was a lock out in a factory in Johanngeorgenstadt.<sup>1129</sup> Meanwhile new activists flocked into the NSDAP. In Eibenstock an SA was founded and a new party branch was founded in Erla-Crandorf.<sup>1130</sup> The district leader had to remind zealous party branches that it was impossible to fulfil all their demands for prominent speakers and that they should refrain from contacting them themselves<sup>1131</sup>, and the headquarters in Plauen reported a growing number of party activists who wanted to acquire the speaker pass<sup>1132</sup>. A clear indication of the growth of the Nazi movement was the division of the former district of Zwickau into two sub-districts. The AH Schwarzenberg and parts of other districts north of it became the new sub-district of Aue in early 1931 and an independent district at the end of the year.<sup>1133</sup> The police stated in February 1931: "The hostility between the different parties reaches a point which will inevitably lead to a civil war in Germany."<sup>1134</sup> The depression continued to worsen and affected more and more economic sectors and individuals. The atmosphere among small businessmen and shopkeepers, and particularly among the unemployed and pensioners, was "very tense" due to government measures in Berlin.<sup>1135</sup> Workers, civil

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<sup>1129</sup> Ibid., Januar 1931.

<sup>1130</sup> Ibid., Nr. 1944, April, August 1931.

<sup>1131</sup> FK, Nr. 7, 9.1.1931; *ibid.*, Nr. 265, 13.11.1931.

<sup>1132</sup> BA, SlSch, Rundschreiben Plauen, 7.1.1931.

<sup>1133</sup> FK, Nr. 49, 27.2.1931.

<sup>1134</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1944, Februar 1931.

<sup>1135</sup> Ibid., August 1931.

servants, especially teachers, were "very embittered about the government measures" too.<sup>1136</sup> At the same time long term unemployed had no wood fire to heat their flats, local farmers described their situation as a "catastrophe", workers were appalled that they had to pay high church taxes while rich landowners only paid a small amount or nothing, innkeepers spoke about the need to close their pubs if business worsened, and employers feared immediate "industrial collapse" and expressed their resentments of the reparation payments.<sup>1137</sup> Most importantly, hardly anyone saw a light at the end of the tunnel. The police recorded the atmosphere of resignation and hopelessness at the end of 1931: "An improvement of the economic situation is not expected, it is rather feared that the economy will collapse completely."<sup>1138</sup>

In mid-1931 the police observed that the high unemployment, cuts in wages and financial emergency measures from the central government "drive large parts of the working population into the hands of the radical parties."<sup>1139</sup> Additionally, the NSDAP argued in its meetings that particularly the lower civil servants and small businessmen had to suffer most under the system of government.<sup>1140</sup> The NSDAP was thriving on the people's increasing disillusionment with the central government and flooded the district with up to twenty-seven meetings each month. Although the NSDAP organised an average of more than eighteen meetings every month and completely outpaced all other parties combined, they still managed to increase their average number of participants

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<sup>1136</sup> Ibid., Oktober 1931.

<sup>1137</sup> Ibid., Juli, Oktober, November, Dezember 1931, Januar 1932.

<sup>1138</sup> Ibid., November 1931.

<sup>1139</sup> Ibid., Juli 1931.

<sup>1140</sup> Ibid., September 1931.

considerably in 1931. For the first time, the average number of participants at their meetings was higher than that of any other party (see Figure 12).

The other political parties were not able to match the Nazis' dynamic, let alone seriously challenge the continuous rise of the NSDAP. The bourgeois parties' seven meetings between October 1930 and December 1931 (none of which was directed against the NSDAP), contrasted sharply with the Nazis' 247 meetings. The SPD concentrated its main efforts in fighting the Nazis. Twenty-three of its overall thirty-nine meetings were targeted against the NSDAP during that period. Their intentions were good, but in reality the party organisation was disintegrating in the Erzgebirge and these were pitiful efforts against the well oiled NSDAP propaganda machine. The SPD had lost the vitality of the 1926 '*Fürstenenteignungs*' campaign. The SPD, like the bourgeois parties, for too long behaved like a traditional party of local dignitaries ('*Honoratioren*') which only campaigned shortly before elections.<sup>1141</sup> From the late 1920s onwards it was unable to respond sufficiently to the Nazis' relentless propaganda style. Moreover, as government party and main creator of the system the Social Democrats were more and more driven onto the defensive. The Nazis in Aue predicted this well at the time of the SPD's last electoral success in May 1928: "The SPD is visibly rejoicing in its election victory. We congratulate them, after all they have to take responsibility for interior and for foreign affairs in the future. And

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<sup>1141</sup> Walter Fabian, a former SPD leader from eastern Saxony described: "In small and medium sized villages and towns, and also in large towns, one only spoke before elections or on May the First. Normally the gatherings were for a limited circle only." W. Fabian, '*Arbeiterführer und Arbeiterbildungswesen im Freistaat Sachsen*', *Herkunft und Mandat*, pp. 123-124.

they will thoroughly fail again, which will open up the eyes of many German workers again ... it was only a 'Pyrrhic victory'. It is true that the SPD has still a comparatively large electorate behind it, however, this is only a dead mass, which is only kept together by the party organ. Opposite this is the strengthened NSDAP. We have a fighting spirit, because we have the deep belief that we will seize victory in the final battle."<sup>1142</sup> It speaks for itself that the enormous number of SPD sports clubs in the region - there were thirty-nine clubs in thirty of the total of fifty-one villages and towns in the district<sup>1143</sup> - did not seem to help the party's propaganda drive.

The KPD took the fight against the Nazis more seriously too and organised nineteen of its 123 meetings against the latter. Overall, however, the Communists were more keen on exploiting the crisis for their own purpose than throwing all their energies against the NSDAP. Between autumn 1930 and the end of 1931 they gave eighteen talks about the apparently exemplary situation in the Soviet Union, organised at least seven meetings for the unemployed, concentrated five of their talks on the treacherous SPD, and held meetings on various other topics to attract specific groups in society. While the bourgeois parties were inactive and the SPD was more and more driven onto the defensive, the only two dynamic parties left, the NSDAP and KPD, both aimed at overthrowing the system. Furthermore, like other regions, the local Nazis received invaluable support from the local bourgeois press. The Nazis in Aue were full of praise for their local newspaper, the right-wing *Erzgebirgischer Volksfreund*, and described the paper

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<sup>1142</sup> NSfS, Nr. 22, 3.6.1928.

<sup>1143</sup> *Geschäftsbericht ATSB 1928/29*, pp. 216-217.

as an "incorruptible fighter for national and *völkisch* concerns" which had helped to spread the ideas of Hitler.<sup>1144</sup>

In the face of government helplessness and inactivity towards the growing crisis, people longed for some kind of action. In autumn right wing circles expressed the hope that the NSDAP would become active and do something.<sup>1145</sup> Increasingly more people favoured the Nazis' cry for a tough line in foreign policy and an end to reparation payments. The local Nazis demanded resolute action in the negotiations for rearmament and reparations against the "arrogant French".<sup>1146</sup> The police observed: "All sections of society sharply criticize the government and demand that all payments to the victorious powers is stopped."<sup>1147</sup>

For many people the rise of the dynamic Nazis seemed unstoppable. Furthermore, their promise to re-build a strong and healthy Germany seemed to provide the only hope in the middle of a deepening crisis which seemed to lead to the destruction of the whole system. Additionally, only the NSDAP seemed capable of checking the perceived threat of social unrest and a possible civil war. The police noted at the end of 1931: "Generally the people express the opinion that the NSDAP will soon be the strongest of all political parties, and that its rising movement cannot be stopped by anything. The SPD seems to be on the way to perishing. The party apparently continuously loses members who join the NSDAP, KPD and the newly founded SAP. Regarding the political situation, the people expect that the KPD will initiate large unrest ... The majority of the peaceful population is very embittered about the bloody

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<sup>1144</sup> *Erzgebirgischer Volksfreund*, Nr. 217, 16.9.1933.

<sup>1145</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1944, Oktober 1931.

<sup>1146</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 1945, Februar 1932.

<sup>1147</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 1944, Dezember 1931.

terror of the KPD. There is surprise that the government does not introduce decisive measures."<sup>1148</sup>

In 1932 the crisis worsened further. Police reports confirmed that the economic situation continued to deteriorate each month and that business had reached more or less a "standstill".<sup>1149</sup> In February only 18.1 per cent of all large factories recorded good business, while 59.7 per cent were struggling and 22.2 per cent were closed (see Figure 8). The social tensions due to unemployment and poverty rose too. The police recorded in the spring: "There was and still is great anger among those who receive social benefits because of the cuts in aid. In some places in the district the local police, sometimes backed up by the riot squad, was kept ready on pay days to keep public order."<sup>1150</sup> The number of violent clashes between political opponents rose too. This was particularly the case in strongholds of the KPD and SPD where the Nazis faced stiff resistance from radical left-wing supporters. The police frequently reported fights in the KPD stronghold of Schneeberg and the SPD bastion in Lössnitz.<sup>1151</sup>

The swing towards the Nazis continued in 1932. The police stated early that year: "The majority of the population expect that the NSDAP will be the strongest party in due time and that it will take over government responsibility in the spring. Only this party seems to be able to change the current extremely bad economic and political situation."<sup>1152</sup> A little later the police reported: "The

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<sup>1148</sup> Ibid., Nr. 1945, November 1931.

<sup>1149</sup> Ibid., Februar 1932.

<sup>1150</sup> Ibid., Nr. 1945, Mai 1932.

<sup>1151</sup> E.g. two Nazis were seriously wounded by activists of the *Reichsbanner* and KPD in Lössnitz (STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1945, August 1932).

<sup>1152</sup> Ibid., Nr. 1944, Januar 1932.

NSDAP is winning more and more supporters through the determined and purposeful appearance of the party's speakers in its frequent meetings."<sup>1153</sup>

The KPD, but especially the NSDAP, organised many meetings, propaganda parades, distributed leaflets, put up posters and advertised in newspapers during the election for the *Reich* president in spring 1932. However, while the NSDAP was rewarded and mobilized the majority of the voters for Hitler in the second ballot (51.3 per cent), Thälmann only received 17.5 per cent of the votes and the KPD experienced a set-back in its ability to mobilize their supporters. Winkler rightly points out that it is likely that Thälmann's loss of 5,896 votes in the district between the first and the second ballot (6.9 per cent) was caused by Communists who stayed at home, or even voted for Hitler in the second ballot.<sup>1154</sup>

However, the disappointment of the majority of the local population over the election of Hindenburg and not Hitler was short-lived. When the national parliament was dissolved in Berlin the police captured the people's revived expectations: "There is hope that the new government, which is likely to be filled by the NSDAP, will find special solutions to the economic situation."<sup>1155</sup> During the campaign for the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections the NSDAP's propaganda headquarters in Munich (RPL) gave out the slogan: 'Germany wake up!'<sup>1156</sup> The NSDAP's fifty-one public campaign meetings featured a variety of topics, like women, religion, and the economy in the forthcoming Third Reich. The topics of the meetings did not reflect the RPL's targeting of the SPD

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<sup>1153</sup> Ibid., Nr. 1945, Februar 1932.

<sup>1154</sup> Winkler, *Katastrophe*, p. 529.

<sup>1155</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1945, Juni 1932.

<sup>1156</sup> Paul, *NS-Propaganda*, p. 100.



as main opponent.<sup>1157</sup> There was not a single NSDAP meeting which had the SPD or Marxism as its topic.

The local NSDAP gained 49.1 per cent of the vote and only lost 2.3 per cent in the 6. November *Reichstag* elections. It was striking, however, that the Nazis only gained about 32.2 per cent of the seats in the district's local elections on 13 November.<sup>1158</sup> This was a loss of 14.6 per cent within one week and clearly a result of the NSDAP's negative attitude and comparatively bad organisation in local affairs. In 1928 the local expert for communal affairs, Hans Lenk from Aue, similar to his colleagues elsewhere, postulated the NSDAP's tactics in the local councils: "Not positive co-operation, but strict opposition!"<sup>1159</sup> Henceforth the Nazis never really changed their attitude. The Nazis' tendency to blame the other parties and the system for all problems<sup>1160</sup>, their avoidance of discussing detailed solutions to the problems, and their sweeping promises of improvements once they were in power, did not reap the same electoral success in local elections as it did in general elections. People voted for the Nazis to set up a complete new political and economic system, however, in local affairs they were more 'conservative' and preferred the traditional parties to look after the street in front of their houses. The NSDAP's poor results in local elections were not surprising. An activist from the Erzgebirge complained to the Munich headquarters about the NSDAP's poor material on local affairs compared to the one by the Marxist

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<sup>1157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1158</sup> *FK*, Nr. 22, 26.1.1933.

<sup>1159</sup> *NSFS*, Nr. 24, 5.8.1928.

<sup>1160</sup> E.g. see the articles 'Zschorlau, Erzgebirge: Wie lange noch?' (*FK*, Nr. 95, 21.11.1930), or 'Steinbach im Erzgebirge: ein durch Marxismus ruinierter Ort!' (ibid., Nr. 259, 6.11.1931).

parties<sup>1161</sup>, and the Saxon NSDAP only introduced a very thin (eight pages) 'Correspondence for Local Council Members' in late 1931.<sup>1162</sup>

The economic depression continued in 1933. Innkeepers announced that the "collapse" of their trade was "inevitable"; the whole region suffered losses due to the lack of snow in their ski resorts during Christmas and New Year.<sup>1163</sup> Hitler's appointment as Chancellor enhanced the polarization of the local population. While the majority greeted the appointment and the police observed a unity among the citizens with nationalistic sympathies, the Left as well unified in its opposition against the new government.<sup>1164</sup> Before the *Reichstag* elections in early March SPD and KPD activists formed the 'Socialist Fighting Union' and nationalist organisations staged parades with "unprecedented participation" in all villages and towns.<sup>1165</sup> The majority of the population voted for the NSDAP (51.9 per cent) and reacted with joy, relief and great expectations at the election result and the following celebrations (particularly the 'Day of Potsdam'). The police recorded that many people displayed flags from their windows and that "many eyes were watering with joy despite the enormous misery."<sup>1166</sup>

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1161 BA, NS 25, Nr. 329, 23.8.1929.

1162 Ibid., NS 22, Nr. 1067.

1163 STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1950, Januar 1933.

1164 Ibid., Februar 1933.

1165 Ibid., Februar, März 1933.

1166 Ibid., März 1933.

**(v) The challenges for the Nazis in the AH Schwarzenberg:  
working classes, middle classes, economic crisis and religion**

The local Nazis faced four main challenges in their ambition to become a mass party in the AH Schwarzenberg: 1 to attract workers and unemployed; 2 to attract the rest of the society, i.e. mainly the middle classes; 3 to respond to a worsening economic crisis; 4 to react to an emerging rival 'catch-all' party based on religious sentiments.

Seventy per cent of the working population were employed in industry in the AH Schwarzenberg. To become a mass movement the Nazis needed to attract large parts of the working classes. We saw that the local Nazis tried to woo the working classes, more than any other group, before 1933. In spring 1931 they proclaimed success in the election to the factory councils in Aue<sup>1167</sup>, and a little later proudly reported that the Erzgebirge, a former Marxist bastion, developed into a National Socialist stronghold.<sup>1168</sup> At the end of the year the district leadership stated that sixty per cent of all Storm-troopers came from the working class<sup>1169</sup>, and ordered every party branch to build up factory council branches.<sup>1170</sup> When the Nazis embarked on their most favourite theme, maladministration and financial problems in local villages and towns, they mainly targeted workers who still supported the 'corrupt' Marxist parties in these places.<sup>1171</sup>

In a district with a high unemployment rate it was crucial that the NSDAP included this group in its propaganda too. After the KPD

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<sup>1167</sup> FK, Nr. 95, 24.4.1931.

<sup>1168</sup> Ibid., Nr. 106, 8.5.1931.

<sup>1169</sup> Ibid., Nr. 283, 5.12.1931.

<sup>1170</sup> Ibid., Nr. 259, 6.11.1931.

<sup>1171</sup> E.g. see 'Zschorlau, Erzgebirge: Wie lange noch?' (ibid., Nr. 95, 21.11.1930); 'Steinbach im Erzgebirge: ein durch Marxismus ruinierter Ort!' (ibid., Nr. 259, 6.11.1931).

concentrated much of its agitation and organised at least seven well attended meetings for the unemployed, the NSDAP was the district's second most active party campaigning for out-of-work voters. The Nazis only organised two meetings for the unemployed<sup>1172</sup>, but put a lot of emphasis on portraying themselves as a party which looked after the group. On several occasions they underlined that the unemployed were the ones who were hit worst by the economic and financial crisis in the communes. They "unreservedly supported" Communist motions in town councils for winter aid for unemployed<sup>1173</sup>, and organised winter aid for their own unemployed Storm-troopers and party members.<sup>1174</sup> They even organised party cells and a *Gau* circular for the unemployed.<sup>1175</sup> It is important to remember that even the KPD only reached a tiny fraction of the officially 240,000 unemployed in the district in its 'unemployment' meetings at the end of the Weimar era.

One of the most serious challenges to the success of the local Nazis in attracting working-class support was the great effort the Communists' made to describe a 'heaven-like' situation in the Soviet Union compared with the crisis-ridden capitalist world. Between autumn 1930 and the end of 1931 the Communists organised eighteen public talks, mainly given by party activists who had visited the country themselves, about the apparently exemplary situation in the Soviet Union. The Nazis had to respond to this. They agreed with the KPD about overthrowing the existing

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<sup>1172</sup> In Aue in February 1930 (*SB*, Nr. 8, 23.2.1930) and in Eibenstock in July 1931 (*STA D*, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1944, Juli 1931)

<sup>1173</sup> *FK*, Nr. 104, 2.12.1930.

<sup>1174</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 283, 5.12.1931.

<sup>1175</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 259, 6.11.1931.

system, but they were forced to confront the Communists when putting forward their own 'attractive' alternative to the current order. More than anything else, the Nazis' success depended on their ability to convince the masses that their vision of a future state, i.e. a National Socialist state, was the only positive alternative to the existing misery.

The local NSDAP reacted to the KPD's challenge and organised eight meetings between mid-1931 and the end of the year, and another six meetings in 1932, in which party speakers painted a picture of horror about the situation in Russia. This was part of a Nazi campaign throughout Saxony. Klötzner, a former member of the Cheka, and the *Reich* speaker Richter from Hanover, toured the state and spoke about 'The true face of the Soviet Union' from May 1931 onwards. Klötzner's meetings caused much publicity and were able to attract crowds of up to 700 people in the AH Schwarzenberg.<sup>1176</sup>

The Nazis were generally very quick in their reactions to any serious challenge from the Marxist parties. When the KPD, but particularly the SPD, stepped up its anti-Nazi propaganda after the September 1930 *Reichstag* elections, the Nazis responded with increased agitation against both parties and Marxism in general.<sup>1177</sup> From November on the Nazis in the AH Schwarzenberg targeted specifically the SPD with meetings like: "Death to the lie.

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<sup>1176</sup> Klötzner, his father and his brother, were former members of the KPD (his father founded the KPD in Chemnitz) until they became disillusioned during a visit in Soviet Russia. Klötzner then was suspected as a 'counter-revolutionary and just managed to escape from Russia. During NSDAP meetings he appeared in the uniform of the GPU (successor name of Cheka) and showed his Russian papers (including the GPU paper) to visitors (BA, SISch, Nr. 208, Rundschreiben Plauen, 22.5.1931).

<sup>1177</sup> Ibid., Schreiben 30.10.1930.

The SPD in favour of a health insurance certificate (*Krankenschein*) for 50 *Pfennig*".<sup>1178</sup>

To become a 'catch-all party' the Nazis also needed to attract all other groups in society, i.e. particularly the middle classes. We saw that the NSDAP stepped up its propaganda towards the middle classes in early 1928 when it campaigned against a department store in Schwarzenberg because it threatened small business men and craftsmen. Kunz warned about "The destruction of the middle classes".<sup>1179</sup> The NSDAP, compared with the passive middle class parties, increasingly took the initiative on the streets, in public meetings and in the press. The Nazis' resolute stance against Marxism and the perceived threat of disturbances and civil war drove members of the middle classes to the NSDAP. Neither the government nor the other parties was able to help the suffering population or able to offer a solution out of the crisis (except the Communists' vision of a Bolshevik state).

The way in which the Nazis responded to the catastrophic economic crisis was crucial to their becoming the largest mass party in the region. It was striking that the Nazis almost completely neglected local issues in their meetings. The NSDAP only organised four meetings which centred around local affairs (outside local election campaigns) between 1926 and July 1932. This is surprising as the local population faced very specific and extremely grave economic problems from the late 1920s onwards. Employees in the widespread cottage industry lead an appalling existence in the Erzgebirge. A Communist parliamentarian described how mothers and their children produced kid gloves twelve to fourteen hours a

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<sup>1178</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1943, November 1930.

<sup>1179</sup> Ibid., Nr. 1941, Februar, April 1928.

day for a weekly income of five to six *Reichsmark*.<sup>1180</sup> The centre of this trade was in Johannegeorgenstadt where more than 1,100 people produced kid gloves at home. The same parliamentarian discussed how whole families, father, mother, grandmother and two children, produced chip baskets and altogether earned twenty-two *Reichsmark* a week in Bockau and Lauter.<sup>1181</sup> Some local industries were completely wiped out during the economic crisis. The toy and embroidery industry totally collapsed and the beadwork industry was nearly at a standstill by mid-1930.<sup>1182</sup> A DVP parliamentarian reported in early 1933: "The once prosperous enamel industry in the area of Schwarzenberg ... a significant source of income for many workers, is completely wiped out."<sup>1183</sup> Lastly, there were the specific economic problems the district faced as a border region.

There was thus a wide choice of grave problems in the district. However, the Nazis did not organise a single local meeting on these issues and were the least interested in discussing them of all parliamentary members in Dresden. When they were forced to take part in the debate, the Nazis made it clear that "they can only find a solution to these problems in their own state" but that they were willing "to give provisional support" to measures which were designed to ease the catastrophic situation in the Erzgebirge.<sup>1184</sup> This was a clever and opportunist tactic because the NSDAP was not caught in the insoluble problem of how to overcome the crisis in practical terms. The Nazis' tactic was to distance themselves

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<sup>1180</sup> *VdSL*, 3. Wp, 31. Sitzung, 12.5.1927, pp. 1059-1062.

<sup>1181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1182</sup> STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1943, März, Mai 1930.

<sup>1183</sup> *VdSL*, 5. Wp, 104. Sitzung, 14.2.1933, p. 4537.

<sup>1184</sup> *Ibid.*, 22. Sitzung, 15.1.1931, p. 872.

from all responsibility for the consequences of the 'corrupt', Marxist 'November system' and to promise a solution once a nationalistic and strong National Socialist state was created. None of the other political parties had anything similar to offer which appealed to all sectors in society.

The government and the bourgeois parties discussed the enormous misery in the Erzgebirge and the border regions.<sup>1185</sup> But they were not in the financial position to cure the problems of what were largely old-fashioned and declining industries, and they sometimes admitted this.<sup>1186</sup> The SPD tried to win over supporters with an honest political debate. A Social Democrat played down the competition by Czechoslovakia and argued in parliament: "The fact that there is considerable unemployment in Saxony is caused by our large number of small business, but also by the exceptionally unproductive work of these firms."<sup>1187</sup> The speaker went on to explain the main cause for the economic depression: "Nowadays the piano industry only uses about twenty per cent of its production capacity, but not because the wages are too high, but because there simply is no demand. Demand has decreased due to the spread of mechanical music, radio, gramophone, etc. ... neither the German and the Saxon economic crisis, nor the world economic crisis, is caused by economically harmful Marxist union and wage policies,

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<sup>1185</sup> Ibid., 16. Sitzung, 27.11.1930, pp. 570-578; *ibid.*, 104. Sitzung, 14.2.1933, pp. 4536-4541.

<sup>1186</sup> A member of the DNVP stated that the problem of the border regions could not be solved without the help from the *Reich* (*ibid.*, 16. Sitzung, 27.11.1930, p. 578). The KPD reported that the government and the bourgeois parties declared in a committee that "it would not make sense to support the chip basket industry" because there was not enough qualified wood in the Erzgebirge and no chance to re-gain the lost markets against the competition by machine made chip baskets from abroad (*ibid.*, 4. Wp, 102. Sitzung, 24.1.1929, p. 3805).

<sup>1187</sup> Ibid., 5. Wp, 22. Sitzung, 15.1.1931, p. 857.



but it is caused by ... the nature of the capitalist system. And on top of this comes direct capitalist mismanagement."<sup>1188</sup> These rational explanations did not comfort those who faced extreme misery or anxieties about the future.<sup>1189</sup> Furthermore, statements like this alienated the workforce in the region and only appealed to those who favoured the replacement of the current system by a marxist state. A rapprochement between the SPD and the majority of the middle classes was not realistic despite the party's continuous attempt to woo for middle class support. The SPD newspaper in Meißen enhanced the prejudices between both groups by describing master craftsmen as "old, reactionary, opposed to everything new"<sup>1190</sup>, and party colleagues in Zwickau warned about a strike of the butchers' guild: "In the struggle against injustice we will always fight on the side of the butchers, however, if it is against the consumers interest we would make so much noise that the struggle will fail."<sup>1191</sup>

A Communist member of the parliament was not reluctant to underline what he regarded as the only remedy for the misery of the people: "It will not help them if the Saxon government will give them ... one or several million in subsidies. This will not help at all, they will not get out of their misery but the misery will still continue. One can clearly see that one has to tackle the root if one wants to get rid of it, one has to get rid of the capitalist system (very true! from the Communists). The capitalist system must be removed."<sup>1192</sup> Nearly every one in the region supported this, but

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<sup>1188</sup> Ibid., pp. 857-859.

<sup>1189</sup> Bennecke, 'SA Sachsen', pp. 76-77.

<sup>1190</sup> Lobmeier, 'Mittelschichten', p. 97.

<sup>1191</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>1192</sup> VdSL, 5. Wp, 48. Sitzung, 25.6.1931, p. 1894.

while never more than forty per cent of the population were seeking a Marxist solution, the majority was in favour of a nationalist, a 'National Socialist, solution.

The Nazis' championship of a strong, nationalist state was decisive for their popularity, particularly in a border region. It is generally accepted that the atmosphere in border regions was more nationalistic than elsewhere in the *Reich*.<sup>1193</sup> The NSDAP frequently organised *Grenzlandtage*<sup>1194</sup> at which party members from Saxony, Thuringia, Bavaria and Czechoslovakia (Bohemia) met near the border to demonstrate against the division and exploitation of the 'November system'.<sup>1195</sup> The Nazis attempted to stir up hatred against "inferior elements from Poland and Slovakia" who worked in the coal mines of the Zwickau district<sup>1196</sup> and attacked a club in Aue which did not use 'black-white-red' flags at its festival<sup>1197</sup>.

The Saxon government did its part to enhance nationalist feeling and anti-Czech sentiments. In 1931 they sent a detailed questionnaire to villages and towns on the border for a memorandum about 'the predicament of the border region' in an effort to gain more aid from the *Reich* government in Berlin.<sup>1198</sup> The questionnaire not only sought to establish the economic decline and misery, but also the "danger for ... *Deutschtum* on both sides of the border ... and the infiltration of the national *Tschechentums* in areas of originally purely German population."<sup>1199</sup> The response

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<sup>1193</sup> Winkler, *Katastrophe*, p. 698.

<sup>1194</sup> Literally, 'border region day'.

<sup>1195</sup> E.g. see the *Grenzlandtag* in Adorf/Vogtland (*NSfS*, Nr. 35, 31.8.1928) or in Johanneorgenstadt (*ibid.*, Nr. 42, 21.10.1928).

<sup>1196</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 27, 8.7.1928.

<sup>1197</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 32, 12.8.1928.

<sup>1198</sup> STA D, AH Annaberg, Nr. 592-593, Notlage der sächsischen Grenzgebiete.

<sup>1199</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 592, Staatskanzlei, 10.6.1931.

from several border towns in the AH Annaberg, the eastern neighbour of the AH Schwarzenberg, underlined the locals' perceived feeling of threat from the Czech nation and their extreme nationalist and racist attitudes. The town of Jöhstadt reported that "*Tschechisierung* proceeds in giant strides ... in several decades the border region with purely German population will be infiltrated strongly, maybe even predominantly, by Czechs. A mix with the German population on the German side will be inevitable."<sup>1200</sup> The town of Oberwiesenthal worried that "*Deutschtum* was seriously endangered abroad, and particularly at the border."<sup>1201</sup> The NSDAP benefitted from these fears and gained 59.5 per cent of the vote in Oberwiesenthal, and 54.1 per cent of the vote in Jöhstadt in the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections.

More than anything else, the local NSDAP tried to attract people to their meetings with slogans against the November system and the misery it caused for Germany, and by emphasising the qualities of their own party and of their leader Hitler (see Table 24). These

**Table 24:** NSDAP meeting topics in the AH Schwarzenberg between November 1925-July 1932<sup>1</sup> (percentage in brackets)

	Nov. 1925- May 1928	June 1929- Sept. 1930	Nov. 1930- July 1932
total	65	177	469
November system/ Germany's misery	29 (44.6)	73 (41.2)	93 (19.8)
NSDAP/Hitler	9 (13.8)	33 (18.6)	119 (25.4)
anti-Marxist	9 (13.8)	21 (11.9)	46 (9.8)
specific group/topic <sup>2</sup>	11 (16.9)	23 (13.0)	89 (19.0)
specific party	0	0	15 <sup>3</sup> (3.2)
others	7 (10.9)	27 (15.3)	107 (22.8)

1: topic of 711 meetings is known.

2: for categories of specific group/topic see Table 25 below.

3: SPD: 10, KPD: 5. Source: STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940-1945.

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<sup>1200</sup> Ibid., Jöhstadt, 19.2.1931.

<sup>1201</sup> Ibid., Oberwiesenthal, 23.2.1932.

were broad themes which could appeal to all groups in society. At the same time, the more the movement grew and a Nazi state became possible, the more the Nazis felt obliged to explain their party's positions on issues like religion, the economy, or workers and women.

The skill of the local Nazis was to remain vague about issues where there was no immediate solution, and to fight very determinedly on issues where they felt they could argue a point. The most distinctive feature of the Nazis' meeting topics in the AH Schwarzenberg was the great number of meetings about the relationship between the NSDAP and religion (see Table 25 below). There were good reasons for this. The area was a stronghold of the

**Table 25: NSDAP meetings which appealed to a specific group or dealt with a specific issue in the AH Schwarzenberg between November 1925-July 1932**

	Nov. 1925- May 1928	June 1929- Sept. 1930	Nov. 1930- July 1932
religion	0	4	29
workers	3	1	10
farmers	2	0	10
youth	0	3	7
local affairs	1	6	2
middle classes	1	1	6
freemasonry	0	3	5
women	0	0	7
anti-Semitism	2	1	2
military/WWI	0	0	5
Harzburg reactionary	0	0	3
consumer cooperatives/ warehouses	1	1	0
invalids/pensioners	0	0	2
house building	1	0	0
culture	0	1	0
insurance	0	1	0
machines	0	0	1

Source: STA D, AH Schwarzenberg, Nr. 1940-1945.

*Christlich-sozialer Volksdienst* (CSVD), a party which originated from the merger of two former christian parties at the end of 1929.<sup>1202</sup> The CSVD was a protestant movement of nationalistic workers, white-collar workers and former DNVP politicians which stood for a conservative and social pietism and wavered between the support for the Republic or the Monarchy.<sup>1203</sup> The CSVD gained a remarkable 11.2 per cent and 10.6 per cent of the vote in the June 1930 state election and the September *Reichstag* election in the AH Schwarzenberg that year (its average in Saxony was only 2.2/2.5 per cent). This was a serious challenge for the local NSDAP. The CSVD was a new party on the right which appealed to all classes, i.e. particularly to dissatisfied voters of the bourgeois parties, workers and women in the region.

The Nazis reacted swiftly and surely after the June elections. During the September *Reichstag* election campaign two-and-a-half months later they organised three meetings about their stance towards religion. Then, after the CSVD still gained 10.6 per cent of the vote in the region, Dr. Engel from Werdau, the priest Krebs from Plauen, and the local teacher Göpfert focused on this topic and spoke at most of the twenty-nine meetings about NSDAP and religion in the district between December 1930 and July 1932. Between July 1930 and July 1932 the local Nazis gave twenty-eight per cent of all their meetings in which they tried to appeal to a specific group or dealt with a specific issue about their movements relationship with religion. Additionally, the Nazis underlined their attitude as good, Christian, German citizens when they called upon their supporter to vote for the 'Christian lists' during the elections

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<sup>1202</sup> Falter, *Wahlen*, p. 54.

<sup>1203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

of 'parents' councils'.<sup>1204</sup> It is also noteworthy that *Der Freiheitskampf* introduced a small section 'church news' in 1932.<sup>1205</sup> The CSVD, like all other bourgeois parties, was not able to compete with the NSDAP in terms of dynamic and propaganda. Between September 1930 and July 1932 it organised five meetings in the whole district. Its vote dropped to 4.9 per cent in July 1932 and the party ceased to be a serious challenge for the NSDAP.

#### (vi) Conclusion

We have attempted to provide a link between the deepening economic crisis and the nearly simultaneous rise of the Nazi movement in the AH Schwarzenberg. The district offers a typical example of the economic crisis in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland, which covered about two-thirds of the electoral district of Chemnitz-Zwickau, one of the NSDAP's greatest bastions in Weimar Germany. We have documented the fear and desperation of the local population due to the crisis. The background of this crisis is crucial to explain the rise of the Nazi movement in the region. However, it is not possible to establish a concrete link between the particularly miserable situation in a village or town and the strength of the NSDAP. The severity of the economic crisis in a village or town compared to its immediate surrounding area did not explain the success of the local NSDAP. Some villages and towns in the AH Schwarzenberg which faced a particularly severe depression in its industries, like beadwork in Eibenstock, were NSDAP strongholds. Others, like the depressed glove industry in Johannegeorgenstadt,

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<sup>1204</sup> FK, Nr. 112, 16.5.1931. Also see Chapter 8 (ii).

<sup>1205</sup> E.g. see FK, Nr. 123, 28.5.1932.

were places where the Nazis' election results were far below the district's average.<sup>1206</sup>

Additionally, the Nazis' electoral performance was not linked with the predominance of a particular industrial sector. The NSDAP obtained the majority of the vote in the July 1932 *Reichstag* election in places with metal industry (Beierfeld: 61.2%, Bernsbach: 53.5%, Oberschlema: 55.5%, Schwarzenberg: 51.7%, Zschorlau: 60.7%), textile industry (Breitenbrunn: 52.3%, Eibenstock: 54.8%) and paper industry (Niederschlema: 56.6%). Additionally, it did not seem to matter for the NSDAP's electoral success if the small towns were dominated by large factories or many small business places. The NSDAP was strong in places where the majority of the industrial workforce were employed in factories with more than fifty employees<sup>1207</sup>, or where only a minority of the local workforce were employed in large factories<sup>1208</sup>. Throughout Saxony there was no link between the grade of industrialisation and the strength of the NSDAP in 1932 (see Table 26 below). However, there was a small positive correlation between the NSDAP's voting success and a high percentage of local workforce employed in the textile industry, working in agriculture, or working in cottage industry (see Table 26 below).

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<sup>1206</sup> In the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections the NSDAP gained 54.8 per cent of the vote in Eibenstock, and 37.4 per cent in Johanngeorgenstadt.

<sup>1207</sup> E.g. eleven large factories accounted for 75 per cent of the total local workforce in Beierfeld, in Bernsbach the figures were 6/60%, Niederschlema: 5/77.6%, Oberschlema: 4/66.3%, Schwarzenberg: 26/52.4% (A. Zahn 'Die Standorte des Gewerbes in Sachsen', *ZSäStLA*, (1932/33), pp. 125-147).

<sup>1208</sup> Breitenbrunn: 1/25.8%, Eibenstock: 12/28.9%, Zschorlau: 3/45.0% (ibid.).

**Table 26: Saxon districts, its percentage of workforce in certain industries, and the NSDAP's percentage in the July 1932 *Reichstag* elections:**

district/town	NSDAP	industry	agri- culture*	textiles **	cottage ind.***
AH Auerbach	57.9	68.8		48.3	5.3
AH Oelsnitz	57.5	55.7	17.2	39.7	
AH Plauen	56.2	57.5	21.1	63.7	
AH Marienberg	54.4	56.8	19.3	22.3	
AH Freiberg	53.7	44.2	32.5		
Werdau	53.3	67.5		51.5	
AH Annaberg	52.5	65.8		48.4	6.9
Plauen	50.7	63.5		50.0	
AH Dippoldiswalde	50.1	38.4	37.0		
Freiberg	49.7	47.1			
AH Werdau	49.6	58.6	20.3	56.9	
AH Schwarzenberg	49.0	70.0			
AH Flöha	47.9	63.6		49.8	
AH Großenhain	46.6	35.1	39.6		
AH Glauchau	45.9	67.4		64.3	7.0
AH Stollberg	45.0	68.4		49.5	8.7
AH Rochlitz	44.9	60.7	20.7	57.0	9.2
AH Döbeln	44.7	48.0	25.9	19.0	
AH Meißen	43.5	39.0	35.3		
Glauchau	43.4	68.3		58.7	6.1
Zwickau	43.4	48.7			
Aue	43.3	68.0			
AH Oschatz	42.9	34.9	35.2		
AH Grimma	42.3	41.9	29.9		
Bautzen	42.0	44.9			
AH Chemnitz	41.9	77.7		65.9	16.7
Chemnitz	41.9	60.7		30.6	
AH Kamenz	41.9	50.2	28.5	32.9	5.5
Crimmitschau	41.8	67.8		56.8	
AH Bautzen	41.1	47.5	31.7	32.3	
Mittweida	40.9	54.7		42.5	
AH Zwickau	40.6	61.9		28.3	
AH Bornä	40.2	46.6	27.6		
Meerane	39.6	71.3		68.1	
Zittau	39.6	49.6		45.6	
AH Pirna	39.3	51.5	21.5		9.8
Reichenbach	38.7	62.5		58.2	
AH Löbau	38.7	51.7	20.3	48.8	
Wurzen	38.5	62.7			
Dresden	37.7	45.5			
Döbeln	37.2	57.2			
AH Dresden	36.3	53.5			
Pirna	33.5	55.0		20.4	
AH Zittau	32.9	60.6	16.4	45.9	
Meißen	32.6	59.2			
Leipzig	32.3	46.7			
Riesa	31.1	53.6			
AH Leipzig	30.0	55.7			
Freital	21.6	70.2			

\*: > 15 per cent; \*\*: > 19 per cent; \*\*\*: > 5.3 per cent.

Source: calculated from *StJbSa*, (1924/26); *StDR*, (1932); F. Walter, 'Die sächsische Textilindustrie', *ZSäStLA*, (1928/29), p. 256; A. Pfütze 'Die Haus- (Heim-) arbeiter nach Verwaltungsbezirken 1928', *ZSäStLA*, (1932/33), pp. 251-252.



If one takes the number of people in need (*Hilfsbedürftige*<sup>1209</sup>) who received welfare support in the different districts of Saxony, it becomes apparent that the Nazis' ability to exploit the economic crisis varied considerably (see Table 27 below). In the KH Chemnitz and KH Zwickau, the NSDAP received election results above the state average in July 1932 in all districts and free towns where the support for *Hilfsbedürftige* was above the state average. However, the Nazis' performance was extremely bad in nearly all areas of the

Table 27: People in need (*Hilfsbedürftige*) who received aid in March 1932 (per 1000 citizens). July 1932 *Reichstag* elections results (figures above the state average are underlined):

town/district	<i>Hilfsbedürftige</i>	NSDAP	SPD/KPD
Chemnitz	<u>116.1</u>	<u>41.9</u>	<u>48.3</u>
Glauchau	51.2	<u>43.4</u>	<u>50.2</u>
Meerane	47.0	39.6	<u>49.9</u>
AH Annaberg	<u>84.5</u>	<u>52.5</u>	38.2
AH Chemnitz	78.0	40.6	<u>50.1</u>
AH Flöha	79.5	<u>47.9</u>	42.4
AH Glauchau	72.7	<u>45.9</u>	45.5
AH Marienberg	73.5	<u>54.4</u>	38.0
AH Stollberg	51.4	<u>45.0</u>	<u>47.3</u>
KH Chemnitz	<u>88.0</u>	<u>45.0</u>	<u>45.7</u>
Aue	<u>88.3</u>	<u>42.3</u>	42.2
Crimmitschau	<u>52.9</u>	<u>41.8</u>	<u>46.1</u>
Plauen	<u>99.5</u>	<u>50.7</u>	37.3
Reichenbach	59.6	38.7	43.5
Werdau	<u>82.9</u>	<u>53.3</u>	36.1
Zwickau	<u>87.3</u>	<u>43.4</u>	42.7
AH Auerbach	73.1	<u>57.9</u>	29.7
AH Oelsnitz	64.7	<u>57.5</u>	30.6
AH Plauen	45.8	<u>56.2</u>	28.8
AH Schwarzenberg	66.5	<u>49.0</u>	37.1
AH Werdau	42.0	<u>49.6</u>	40.3
AH Zwickau	76.8	40.6	41.2
KH Zwickau	72.5	<u>49.5</u>	37.7

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<sup>1209</sup> *Hilfsbedürftige* included war invalids, pensioners, unemployed who received any kind of welfare benefits, and others (A. Betterlein 'Die Statistik der Fürsorge in den Rechnungsjahren 1927 bis 1931', *ZSäStLA*, (1932/33), p. 189).

Dresden	<u>84.5</u>	37.7	<u>47.0</u>
Freiberg	<u>118.4</u>	<u>49.7</u>	36.0
Freital	<u>115.2</u>	21.6	<u>68.4</u>
Meißen	<u>100.1</u>	32.6	<u>54.8</u>
Pirna	<u>135.8</u>	33.5	<u>50.6</u>
Riesa	<u>89.5</u>	31.1	<u>54.2</u>
AH Dippoldiswalde	<u>88.4</u>	<u>50.1</u>	36.7
AH Dresden	<u>86.4</u>	36.3	<u>50.1</u>
AH Freiberg	<u>83.0</u>	<u>53.7</u>	38.1
AH Großenhain	51.9	<u>46.6</u>	40.1
AH Meißen	62.8	<u>43.5</u>	43.8
AH Pirna	<u>95.6</u>	39.3	<u>47.9</u>
KH Dresden	<u>86.2</u>	39.4	<u>46.7</u>
Bautzen	<u>95.5</u>	<u>42.0</u>	35.8
Zittau	60.6	39.6	36.2
AH Bautzen	65.9	41.1	40.0
AH Kamenz	46.1	<u>41.9</u>	39.1
AH Löbau	54.3	38.7	42.1
AH Zittau	65.5	32.9	<u>47.4</u>
KH Bautzen	61.9	39.0	41.2
Döbeln	<u>85.8</u>	37.2	<u>51.0</u>
Leipzig	<u>93.4</u>	32.3	<u>54.4</u>
Mittweida	<u>96.2</u>	40.9	44.8
Wurzen	<u>113.1</u>	38.5	<u>50.6</u>
AH Borna	54.1	40.2	<u>47.5</u>
AH Döbeln	58.0	<u>44.7</u>	<u>46.3</u>
AH Grimma	46.7	<u>42.3</u>	<u>46.2</u>
AH Leipzig	<u>106.4</u>	30.0	<u>58.9</u>
AH Oschatz	63.1	<u>42.9</u>	45.3
AH Rochlitz	60.9	<u>44.9</u>	44.9
KH Leipzig	<u>81.7</u>	36.0	<u>51.8</u>
<b>Saxony</b>	<b>80.8</b>	<b>41.2</b>	<b>45.8</b>

Source: A. Betterlein, 'Die Wohlfahrtserwerbslosen in Sachsen', *ZSäStLA*, (1931), pp. 220-221; A. Betterlein, 'Die Statistik der Fürsorge in den Rechnungsjahren 1927 bis 1931', *ZSäStLA*, (1932/33), p. 189.

KHs Dresden and Leipzig where more people depended on the welfare service than the average. The NSDAP gained votes below the state average in all free towns (Dresden, Freital, Meißen, Pirna, Riesa, Döbeln, Leipzig, Mittweida and Wurzen) - except Freiberg - and in the AHs Dresden, Pirna, and Leipzig.

The Nazis only received a voting percentage above the Saxon average in three (Freiberg, Chemnitz and Plauen) of the ten

electoral districts with the highest percentage of people receiving state support (Pirna, Freiberg, Chemnitz, Freital, Wurzen, AH Leipzig, Meißen, Plauen, Mittweida, Pirna).<sup>1210</sup> It is striking that the combined vote for the Marxist parties was higher than 45.8 per cent of the vote (above average) in seven of these ten places (Pirna, Chemnitz, Freital, Wurzen, AH Leipzig, Meißen, AH Pirna). Of all twenty-eight electoral districts where the NSDAP scored more votes than 41.2 per cent (state average) in the July 1932 elections in Saxony, there were only ten districts/towns where the payment for unemployed and people in aid was above the state average (AH Freiberg, Werdau, AH Annaberg, Plauen, AH Dippoldiswalde, Freiberg, Zwickau, Aue, Bautzen, Chemnitz). There was therefore no clear link between a high rate of unemployment and a high vote for the NSDAP.<sup>1211</sup> On the contrary, overall the NSDAP did better in districts where the number of people who received state support was below the average than in places where the number was above the average. The Nazis' average vote in the former was 42.2 per cent, and 40.4 per cent in the latter.

However, it is true that the NSDAP was strong in five of the six districts of the Saxon employment office with the highest rates of registered unemployed (Chemnitz, Mittweida, Olbernhau, Flöha and Plauen).<sup>1212</sup> Only in Freital, the greatest SPD bastion in the *Reich*,

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<sup>1210</sup> It is likely that fewer unemployed were registered in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland than elsewhere because of the high number of workers employed in the cottage industries or other small scale industries, most of who were not organised in a union and entitled for unemployment benefits.

<sup>1211</sup> This confirms the findings of Hänisch (D. Hänisch, *Sozialstrukturelle Bestimmungsgründe des Wahlverhaltens in der Weimarer Republik. Eine Aggregatdatenanalyse der Ergebnisse der Reichstagswahlen 1924 bis 1933*, (Duisburg, 1983), pp. 119-142). Also see R. J. Evans and D. Geary (eds.), *The German Unemployed. Experiences and Consequences of Mass Unemployment from the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich* (London, 1987).

<sup>1212</sup> F. Walter, 'Die Konjunkturlage in Sachsen im Frühjahr 1932', *ZSäStLA*, (1932/33), p. 251. It is impossible to give exact voting results for the districts

did the Nazis have election results below the state average. At the same time, however, the Nazis also scored electoral results above the average in most employment districts with the lowest unemployment rate (Oschatz, Dippoldiswalde, Reichenbach, Riesa, Grimma, Kamenz), except in Borna and Löbau.

Furthermore, there was no link between the debt the Saxon communities accumulated due to the economic crisis and the strength of the local NSDAP (see Table 28). In the KH Chemnitz and KH Zwickau the NSDAP scored election results below the state average in the indebted communities Gelenau, and Zwickau, but did well in Schwarzenberg, Oberfrohna, Limbach, Klingenthal and Elsterberg. In the KH Dresden and KH Leipzig the Nazis did very disappointingly in the heavily indebted communities of Dresden, Riesa, Pirna, Oetzsch-Markleeberg, Taucha and Hartmannsdorf. In the KH Bautzen the Nazis result was good in the indebted communities of Olbersdorf and Zittau, but bad in Neugersdorf.

**Table 28:** New debts per capita of towns with more than 5,000 citizens in the AH Schwarzenberg and Saxon *Kreishauptmannschaften* in 1932 (three highest and three lowest of KHs only) and election results of July 1932 *Reichstag* elections (figures above state average are underlined):

town	per capita debt (RM)	NSDAP	SPD/KPD
<b>AH Schwarzenberg</b>			
Schwarzenberg	<u>274.4</u>	<u>51.7</u>	33.1
Lössnitz	220.2	39.4	<u>51.5</u>
Aue	192.6	<u>42.3</u>	42.2
Schneeberg	189.6	<u>47.5</u>	34.6
Lauter	150.3	<u>48.0</u>	37.2
Johanngeorgenstadt	130.6	37.4	<u>50.7</u>
Schönheide	105.4	<u>49.8</u>	33.9
Eibenstock	54.5	<u>54.8</u>	32.1

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of the employment office because they often did not coincide with the electoral districts. It is, however, possible to determine if the Nazis did well or badly in the employment districts by comparing the former (see the map of the employment districts in *Der Arbeitsmarkt in Sachsen*, Nr. 24, 12.6.1928) with the latter.

<b>KH Chemnitz</b>	229.1	<u>45.0</u>	<u>45.7</u>
Oberfrohna	<u>459.7</u>	<u>44.0</u>	<u>46.7</u>
Gelenau	<u>422.9</u>	37.7	<u>51.6</u>
Limbach	<u>334.6</u>	<u>48.0</u>	41.7
Buchholz	114.9	<u>48.6</u>	40.7
Rabenstein	107.6	<u>43.9</u>	<u>46.3</u>
Hohndorf	106.6	<u>47.0</u>	<u>48.2</u>
 <b>KH Zwickau</b>	226.4	<u>49.5</u>	37.7
Zwickau	<u>524.8</u>	40.6	<u>47.9</u>
Klingenthal*	<u>369.4</u>	<u>65.3</u>	25.6
Elsterberg*	<u>284.1</u>	<u>63.3</u>	24.4
Schönheide	105.4	<u>49.8</u>	33.9
Adorf	102.3	<u>60.2</u>	25.5
Eibenstock	54.5	<u>54.8</u>	32.1
 <b>KH Dresden</b>	<u>300.8</u>	39.4	<u>46.6</u>
Dresden	<u>341.3</u>	37.7	<u>46.7</u>
Riesa	<u>284.4</u>	31.1	<u>54.2</u>
Pirna	<u>280.5</u>	33.5	<u>50.6</u>
Klotzsche	148.2	37.9	44.0
Weinböhla	62.0	<u>46.1</u>	40.4
Coswig	44.7	40.0	41.5
 <b>KH Bautzen</b>	239.2	39.0	41.1
Olbersdorf	<u>660.8</u>	<u>41.7</u>	<u>46.9</u>
Zittau	<u>338.9</u>	39.6	36.2
Neugersdorf	<u>314.2</u>	34.5	<u>51.9</u>
Reichenau	129.1	31.4	<u>49.2</u>
Kamenz	107.3	40.9	39.1
Bischofswerda	95.2	<u>46.5</u>	44.2
 <b>KH Leipzig</b>	226.1	36.0	<u>51.8</u>
Oetzsch-			
Markleeberg*	<u>531.0</u>	34.3	<u>45.9</u>
Taucha*	<u>440.1</u>	30.0	<u>54.4</u>
Hartmannsdorf*	<u>359.1</u>	36.8	<u>52.2</u>
Borna	122.6	33.0	<u>51.1</u>
Döbeln	100.5	37.2	<u>50.9</u>
Colditz*	95.0	<u>54.8</u>	29.4
 <b>Saxony</b>	<b>248.9</b>	<b>41.2</b>	<b>45.8</b>

\*: election result is only fairly accurate.

Source: G. Hoffmann, 'Die Schulden von Land, Gemeinden und Gemeindeverbänden in Sachsen, *ZSäStLA*, (1932/33), pp. 103-105.

Overall, the NSDAP seemed to score better election results in communities with very low debts than very high debts.<sup>1213</sup> It is striking that nearly all places with the lowest debts in the state (Eibenstock, Weinböhla, Colditz, Bischofswerda, Adorf, and Schönheide) were NSDAP strongholds.

The AH Schwarzenberg was economically not one of the most afflicted regions. The number of people who received welfare support was below the state average, the number of unemployed was only slightly above the state average, and the new debts of its communities were not the highest in Saxony. Nevertheless it became the NSDAP's sixth strongest electoral district in May 1928 and twelfth strongest electoral district in July 1932. The increasing economic crisis provided the necessary background for explaining this. However, other factors, like the weakness of the Marxist parties and organisations, the press, and the behaviour of the bourgeois groups were crucial in determining the strength or weakness of the NSDAP in the individual towns and villages. Overall, the findings suggest that, above everything else, it was fear of economic hardship, social disturbances and the collapse of the whole system that made people turn to the NSDAP. For many people only the Nazis offered a promising non-Marxist solution to the crisis.

Clearer than the direct link between the success of the NSDAP and the economic crisis was the relationship between the Nazis' propaganda and their electoral performance in Saxony. Before the late 1920s, the NSDAP was strongest where it was most active, i.e.

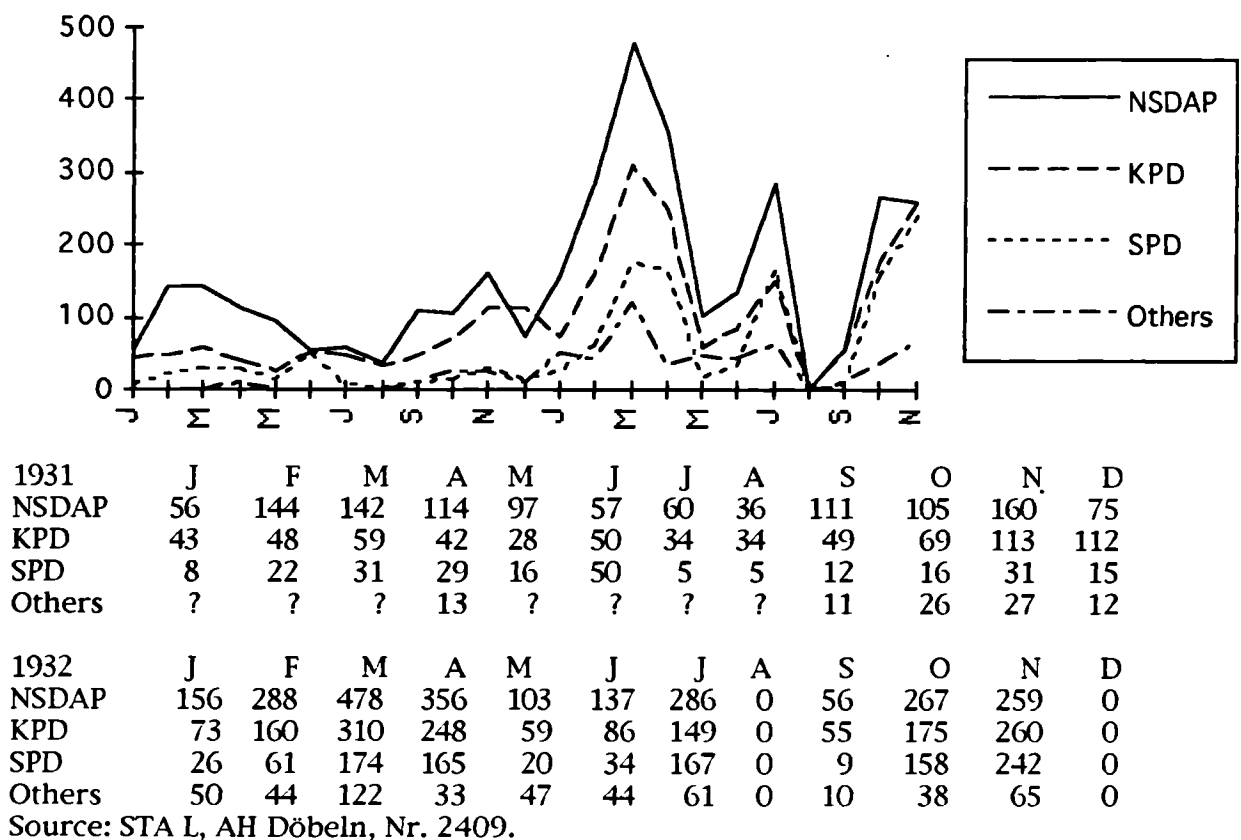
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<sup>1213</sup> This seems to contradict Falter's findings, who argued that there was a positive link between debts in agriculture and business and the electoral success of the NSDAP (Falter, *Wähler*, pp. 314-324).

in south-western Saxony. In the May 1928 *Reichstag* election the NSDAP scored election results above the state average (2.7 per cent) in sixteen electoral districts who were all - except Zittau and Mittweida - in the south-west. Only three districts (Mittweida, Bautzen, Zittau) of the twenty-two where the NSDAP's electoral percentage was above its state average were outside this area in the June 1930 elections. From late 1930 onwards the NSDAP was particularly strong where its propaganda completely outpaced all other opposition parties. Eight of nine electoral districts where the NSDAP received the absolute majority in the July 1932 elections were in the Erzgebirge/Vogtland.

Figure 13:

Number of public meetings of political parties in the KH Leipzig  
(excluding the town of Leipzig) between 1931-1932



The KH Leipzig in north-western Saxony was an SPD bastion and a region where the Nazis found it comparatively difficult to attract mass support (its electoral support always remained below the state and *Reich* average). It is striking that the NSDAP's propaganda was far less dominant here than in the KHs Chemnitz and Zwickau (compare Figures 9-12 on page 293-294 with Figure 13 above). Furthermore, the AH Leipzig, a solid Marxist stronghold and the district where the NSDAP scored a smaller percentage of the vote than in any other AH in Saxony in the July 1932 elections (SPD: 34.3 per cent, KPD: 24.6 per cent, NSDAP: 30.0 per cent), was at the same time a region where the NSDAP was beaten by the Marxist parties in terms of the number of public meetings (see Table 29 below). The lack of a party network and propaganda in the rural areas of north-western, but particularly eastern Saxony,

**Table 29:** The number of public meetings of NSDAP, SPD and KPD in the AH Leipzig between 1 January-5 March 1933

	January	February	March	overall
NSDAP <sup>1</sup>	18	51	21	90
SPD <sup>2</sup>	4	52	25	81
KPD <sup>3</sup>	10	31	18	59
DNVP	0	4	2	6
DVP	0	1	0	1
others <sup>4</sup>	11	11	6	28

1: including SA, HJ, NSBO; 2: including *Reichsbanner*, *Eiserne Front*, *Bund*, and *Sozialistischer Freidenker*; 3: including KJVD, *Rote Hilfe*, *Antifaschistische Aktion*, *Rote Sporteinheit*, and *Internationale Arbeitshilfe*; 4: unemployed, *Jehovas Witnesses*, *Stahlhelm*, etc.

Source: STA L, AH Leipzig, Nr. 2673.

helped to explain the low votes for the Nazis in these areas until 1930. The further east the electoral districts lay, the weaker were the results for the NSDAP, particularly in rural areas. The Nazis



were only able to do reasonably well in towns where propaganda could be made by even a small group. This explained the party's impressive electoral performance in Mittweida/KH Leipzig and the eastern towns of Bautzen and Zittau in 1930. All three towns possessed fairly active NSDAP branches and the Nazis made a lot of propaganda in the months preceding the June 1930 elections.<sup>1214</sup> Hitler, Epp and Wagner spoke in Bautzen during the election campaign.<sup>1215</sup>

However, the development of the Nazis' propaganda machine in Saxony was not only a success story, but also one which faced great problems and limits. The party's policies, the means for carrying out propaganda and for responding to attacks from opponents were often not clear and had to be defined again and again.<sup>1216</sup> Frequently there were no common or even contradictory leaflets in neighbouring party branches<sup>1217</sup>. Until the late 1920s the

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<sup>1214</sup> The NSDAP in Bautzen organised several meetings in and around the town in early 1930 (FK., 8.9.1930), the branch held training evenings for party members once a week (ibid., Nr. 87, 6.6.1930), and possessed the largest and most active SA in eastern Saxony (ibid., Nr. 57, 29.4.1930). The district of Zittau carried out twenty meetings in February (ibid., 12.3.1930), twelve in March (ibid., Nr. 42, 10.4.1930) and twenty-two internal and public meetings in May 1930 (ibid., Nr. 96, 18.6.1930). The Nazis in Mittweida also seemed to be active in organising public meetings (ibid., Nr. 78, 25.5.1930). The NSDAP gained 17.7 per cent of the vote in Mittweida, 17.3 per cent in Bautzen, and 16.9 per cent in Zittau in the June 1930 state elections.

<sup>1215</sup> Ibid., Nr. 91, 12.6.1930; ibid., Nr. 99, 21.6.1930.

<sup>1216</sup> Himmler complained in Plauen that the branch in Naunhof advertised for a *Stahlhelm* band in a leaflet (BA, NS 18, Nr. 5022, 1.6.1927). The *Untergau* Vogtland asked Plauen how to react to an article in the local SPD newspaper in 1927. Plauen advised them to wait for an answer from Berlin (ibid., 14.5.1927). The headquarters in Plauen complained about how one party branch had organised a '*Deutscher Abend*'. The branch had decorated everything black-white-and red, however, there were only two small swastika flags and the programme was signed with '*Festausschuß*'. The headquarters warned that they did not want to see similar 'military club like manners' any more (ibid., SlSch, Nr. 208, 23.10.1930). In mid-1931 Plauen asked the Munich headquarters how to react to the many letters they received because of the large advertisement of a Jewish oil trust in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (ibid., 30.6.1931).

<sup>1217</sup> In 1927 the NSDAP branch in Leipzig reported that one of their branches complained that they had problems in explaining a contradictory

propaganda headquarters in Munich were frequently not able to cope with the amount of work and sometimes also neglected *Gau Saxony*.<sup>1218</sup> Himmler apologized to the *Gauleitung* in Plauen that only Gottfried Feder was able to speak in Saxony as prominent party leader during the May 1928 election campaign. He explained: "One cannot give more than one possesses ... Unfortunately I cannot do more."<sup>1219</sup> Some branches did not follow the instructions from Munich and went directly to the Munich propaganda headquarters or party speakers<sup>1220</sup>; some branches had problems in financing the rent for meeting places<sup>1221</sup>; some speakers cancelled meetings at short notice<sup>1222</sup>; some branches prepared public meetings badly and wasted the time of speakers<sup>1223</sup>, frequently there was a lack of leaflets and propaganda material<sup>1224</sup>, and some supporters of the movement were put off by aggressive propaganda.<sup>1225</sup> Even in

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leaflet from a neighbouring branch to local workers in 1927 (ibid., NS 18, Nr. 5022, 23.4.1927).

1218 Himmler apologized to a party activist in Leipzig for a late answer and pointed out that the headquarters were too small (ibid., 2.2.1927). Dönicke, NSDAP leader of Leipzig, complained to Himmler that he had not received the schedule demanded three weeks earlier for the speakers (ibid., Nr. 5006, 27.2.1928).

1219 Ibid., Nr. 5006, 26.4.1928.

1220 Himmler complained to Plauen that the branch in Großenhain demanded propaganda material from him (ibid., Nr. 5022, 23.8.1928). The NSDAP branch in Chemnitz apologized to Himmler in early 1928 for contacting national party speakers (ibid., Nr. 5006, 13.3.1928).

1221 The NSDAP in Leipzig complained to Himmler that the rent for meeting places was extremely high in Leipzig (ibid., 27.2.1928).

1222 The NSDAP branch in Egidien complained that Haake cancelled a meeting at short notice (ibid., 17.3.1928).

1223 The Munich propaganda headquarters asked Plauen to explain why the meetings for Benesch were badly prepared (ibid., 1.4.1928). The Munich propaganda headquarters complained in Plauen that the district of Dresden had not prepared a meeting for Reich speaker Schöne for several days (ibid., SlSch, Nr. 208, 11.6.1929).

1224 Himmler informed the NSDAP branch in Oelsnitz/Erzgebirge that they had no more leaflets for local elections any more (ibid., NS 18, Nr. 5009, 15.7.1930).

1225 Several member of the *Stahlhelm* in Plauen cancelled their subscription to the *FK* after an aggressive article against their organisation (ibid., Nr. 5018, 22.6.1931).

mid-1931 the propaganda headquarters in Plauen complained that "several branches still did not send in their reports at the end of each month"<sup>1226</sup>, and that several speakers did not appear in brownshirts.<sup>1227</sup> The Nazis from Belgershain/AH Grimma recalled that "no-one in the party looked after them."<sup>1228</sup> They had to take the initiative themselves to buy party leaflets and brochures in Leipzig before the September 1930 elections. Later on none of the four neighbouring party branches was interested in organising a party meeting in the village. The first National Socialist meeting took place only when members from the established branch of Naunhof took pity on them in January 1931.<sup>1229</sup> Most importantly, the NSDAP leadership in Plauen only started to build up an efficient propaganda apparatus after the September *Reichstag* election. Plauen introduced the first propaganda circular at the end of 1930<sup>1230</sup>, and not long afterwards ordered the introduction of a propaganda leader for each district and even party branch.<sup>1231</sup>

Yet, despite all these problems, propaganda was crucial for the success of the NSDAP in Saxony. The Nazis from Belgershain, a small village in the AH Grimma, explained the increase from nine to fifty-six votes (second largest party) between the June and September 1930 elections through the distribution of leaflets and brochures several days before the second election.<sup>1232</sup>

One of the best examples of the importance of propaganda for NSDAP success at the polling station were the elections to the LK in

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<sup>1226</sup> Ibid., SlSch, Nr. 208, 22.5.1931.

<sup>1227</sup> Ibid., 22.5.1931.

<sup>1228</sup> NSDAP Belgershain.

<sup>1229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1230</sup> BA, SlSch, Nr. 208, 23.12.1930.

<sup>1231</sup> Ibid., 22.1.1931.

<sup>1232</sup> NSDAP Belgershain.

Saxony in May 1931. The Nazis won twenty-two of the forty seats although this was the first time that the NSDAP had participated in elections to Agricultural Chambers in a whole state in Germany, and even though the Nazis faced the opposition of the SLV which had controlled the Chamber before 1931. The Saxon Nazis already tried to woo the farmers in the 1920s and possessed a sophisticated agricultural organisation by early 1931. It was organised among the KHs and AHs.<sup>1233</sup> Similar to other propaganda campaigns in the state, the Nazis only used a short time (ten weeks) from planning to carrying out the election campaign for the Agricultural Chamber.<sup>1234</sup> From mid-March onwards the NSDAP headquarters in Plauen gave the order to concentrate propaganda on rural regions<sup>1235</sup>, and the party mobilized a large group of speakers with expertise on agricultural questions (eight Saxon *Gau* speakers, twelve *Gau* speakers from outside Saxony, and additional speakers from *Gau Ostmark*)<sup>1236</sup> for the actual election campaign from late April onwards. *Der Freiheitskampf* introduced a special supplement for the elections, and Plauen ordered the party activists to deliver one leaflet and a ballot paper to each farm in their district, to tell farmers when and at what time voting took place, and to place a party member with ballot papers in each polling station for late canvassing.<sup>1237</sup> No other political party was able to match such widespread rural propaganda or could hope for similar electoral success. The SPD did not even put up its own lists, and the KPD only managed to put up its own lists in Bautzen and

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<sup>1233</sup> BA, SlSch, Nr. 208, Rundschreiben, 15.3.1931.

<sup>1234</sup> Ibid., NS 18, Nr. 5015, Plauen an München, 28.2.1931.

<sup>1235</sup> Ibid., SlSch, Nr. 208, Rundschreiben, 15.3.1931.

<sup>1236</sup> Ibid., Rundschreiben, 20.4.1931.

<sup>1237</sup> Ibid., Rundschreiben, 7.5.1931.

the Erzgebirge, though unsuccessfully. In reality there was only a choice between SLV and NSDAP. In the months before the elections the NSDAP avoided direct confrontation with the SLV in order not to alienate potential voters. The SLV, which was close to the DNVP, was nationalist and right-wing.<sup>1238</sup> The Nazis' campaign was a mix between a concrete manifesto for improvements<sup>1239</sup>, and emotional, nationalist and racist appeals<sup>1240</sup>. Compared with the SLV, the NSDAP appeared more determined, radical, dynamic, unspoiled, fresh and promising. The *FK* explained the success in the elections in the AH Zittau by the "untiring finicky work, particularly the talks with the farmers which took place in the various villages every evening."<sup>1241</sup> The Nazis' agricultural propaganda drive was even more remarkable considering that they also carried out a propaganda campaign protesting against the situation in the Saxon parliament in the second half of March<sup>1242</sup>, as well as a campaign against the SPD's annual party conference in Leipzig in May 1931.

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<sup>1238</sup> The former corvette captain Feldmann, director of the SLV, promulgated in a speech in February 1931: "Two factors are essential for the thriving of a *Volk*: living space (soil) and living power (growth)." He also talked about a "final battle", a "leader" and "*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*" (*FK*, Nr. 39, 16.2.1931).

<sup>1239</sup> The Nazis put forward that the current Agricultural Chamber did not pursue a coherent policy and that it had betrayed its constituencies regarding the tax on milk (*Milchmark*). They promised to get rid of the large bureaucratic machinery, to be economical and in close contact with the constituencies, to close the small agricultural schools, to recognize the *Landbund* if it remained politically neutral, and to increase the farmers interest in the product stock exchange and cattle markets (BA, SlSch, Nr. 208, Rundschreiben, 25.4.1931).

<sup>1240</sup> The *FK* wrote that Germany can only recover through its "blood and soil" (*FK*, Nr. 99, 29.4.1931), that "agriculture will become the corner stone of the Third Reich" and that "the co-operation of the farmers will decide if German soil will be occupied by a healthy German race or slaves of international Jewish capitalism" (*ibid.*, Nr. 109, 12.5.1931).

<sup>1241</sup> *Ibid.*, Nr. 117, 22.5.1931.

<sup>1242</sup> BA, NS 18, Nr. 5016, Plauen and München, 12.2.1931.

### 13. Final conclusion

The development of the NSDAP in Saxony - the most densely populated state and an important industrial region - was crucial for the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany before 1933. The electoral district of Chemnitz-Zwickau, Saxony's most industrialized region in which more than one-third of its population lived, was one of the earliest and remained one of the most important NSDAP strongholds before the Nazi *Machtergreifung* in Germany. Additionally, the NSDAP's electoral breakthrough in the Saxon state elections in 1929 and 1930 were decisive for the development of the party on the national level. It was here that the Nazi leadership was confronted with the question of government participation for the first time in May 1929. This paved the way for Frick's participation in a bourgeois coalition government in Thuringia half a year later. Furthermore, the Nazis' dramatic success in the Saxon state elections in June 1930 was their first significant election victory in an important state in the *Reich*, and a crucial step for the Nazis' national electoral breakthrough in the September 1930 *Reichstag* elections. The June election campaign in Saxony was the NSDAP's first centrally organised massive propaganda campaign under the party's new head of propaganda, Goebbels.

The most distinctive feature of the Saxon Nazis was their skilful exploitation of the enormous crisis which unfolded in the late 1920s. They were masters in opportunism, simplification and deceit. Their actions were ruled by the overriding aim to come to power through the ballot box. In order to mobilize mass support from all classes in society they promised everything to everyone in sweeping statements which were often contradictory. Detailed proposals for improvements remained the exception and played a

subordinate role. This strategy could only succeed because of the enormous crisis which hit Saxon society after 1929. During the time of extreme misery, uncertainty and fear, many citizens were attracted by the Nazis' appeal to their emotions rather to their reason. The Nazis were anxious to point out that they - unlike all other parties - had no links with the 'corrupt' and disintegrating system, which they proclaimed they would sweep away and replace with a strong National Socialist Germany which would serve the interests of all.

The enormous crisis Saxon society faced after the First World War, which reached its peak between 1929 and 1933, was crucial for the rise of the local Nazi movement. The other main factors which explained the Nazis' success in Saxony was the disintegration of the working-class milieu - particularly in south-western Saxony - which was ruthlessly exploited by the Nazis, and the survival of traditional authoritarian mentalities (what we termed the 'nationalist milieu'), which were radicalized in the years of crisis.<sup>1243</sup> The Nazis skilfully exploited the inability of the traditional parties and the elites, in reacting to the challenges of the

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<sup>1243</sup> Geoff Eley explains the success of Nazism primarily as a result of the crisis after the First World War, and regards the 'pre-industrial traditions' of Germany as a complementary aspect (G. Eley, 'What Produces Fascism: Pre-Industrial Traditions or A Crisis of the Capitalist State?', in G. Eley, *From Unification to Nazism. Reinterpreting the German Past* (London, New York, reprinted, 1992), pp. 275-276). I find it difficult to put more emphasis on either aspect. Eley's overall criticism of Kocka's 'one-sided' emphasis on the "powerful persistence of pre-industrial, pre-capitalist traditions" to explain right-wing extremism in Weimar Germany seems justifiable for Saxony too (ibid., p. 257; J. Kocka, 'Ursachen des Nationalsozialismus', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, (25) (1980), pp. 9-13). Far from industrializing rapidly at the end of the nineteenth century, Saxony was one of the oldest industrial regions in Europe and faced problems to adopt its traditional industries (particularly the textile industry) to the new demands of modernization in the twentieth century. Eley is right to point out that "the crucial problem becomes that of establishing how certain 'traditions' became selected for survival rather than others" (Eley, *Unification to Nazism*, p. 262).

crisis. The more the crisis deepened and the middle and upper classes were paralysed by helplessness, the more the National Socialist solution became viable.

The activity of the NSDAP's mass mobilization machine and the response of its political opponents also played a crucial role for the Nazis' electoral success in Saxony. In places where Nazi propaganda dominated public life and where they encountered least opposition from their political opponents, the NSDAP's electoral performance was most successful.

Saxon society produced great opportunities but also severe limitations for the Nazis. A crucial explanation of why the Nazis were able to establish a stronghold in Saxony were the enormous divisions between the Left and the Right in the region. It was no coincidence that the Vogtland, the place of the revolutionary activities of Max Hölz and a very early Communist stronghold<sup>1244</sup>, became the earliest Nazi bastion. Saxony remained a region with sharp contradictions until the end of the Republic. In the November 1932 *Reichstag* elections, the SPD scored its best result in Saxony out of all national electoral districts while the NSDAP gained its second best result in the state, and the Communists also received a percentage of votes far above the national average.<sup>1245</sup>

The Nazis were able to attract support from all sectors of Saxon society. Most importantly, they succeeded - with some reservations - in their most difficult task in Saxony: they established a stronghold among the working class in one of the industrial

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<sup>1244</sup> With 9.1 per cent of the vote, Chemnitz/Zwickau was the best KPD electoral district in the June 1920 *Reichstag* elections.

<sup>1245</sup> The SPD gained 32.2 per cent of the vote in the *Reichstag* electoral district of Leipzig, the NSDAP received 43.4 per cent of the vote in the district of Chemnitz/Zwickau, while the KPD gained 21.4 per cent there too.



heartlands of Germany. The SPD was by far the largest party in Saxony until the early 1930s, the main representative of the working class, and the most resolute defender of the democratic system. The less widespread and deep-rooted the Social Democratic party and organisational network was, the less dedicated, united and determined was its ability to ward off and respond to the enormous challenges posed by the Nazis and the disastrous economic crisis, and the more successful was the NSDAP in mobilizing working-class support during the final years of the Republic. In the heavily industrialised Erzgebirge/Vogtland in particular the Nazis made devastating inroads into the working-class electorate.

The NSDAP also received invaluable support from large sections of the Saxon middle and upper classes. Increasingly more bourgeois clubs, organisations, newspapers, and even parts of the state administration, sympathized with the Nazis. The growing acceptance of the NSDAP in bourgeois circles - particularly among opinion leaders with influence over the press, industry and the state machine - was crucial for the 'away from the Republic movement' and the Nazis' comparatively smooth seizure of power from March 1933 onwards. The Nazis' aggressive ideology found fertile soil and was often identical with the bourgeoisie's nationalist, anti-democratic, and anti-Marxist values. Many members of this conservative milieu, whether they specifically liked the Nazis or not, increasingly saw the NSDAP as the only party which was able to carry out the main task, i.e. to get rid of the Republican system and to create a new authoritarian state. They regarded the Nazis as the only ones capable of creating order in the growing chaos and bringing to heel what they saw as the

increasingly radicalised socialist mobs who were physically monopolising streets and squares.

Overall, the findings suggest that, above everything else, it was fear of economic hardship, social disturbances and the perceived collapse of the whole system that made people turn to the NSDAP. The failure of their traditional parties and governments, and the familiarity with the NSDAP's ideology made this a comparatively smooth process. For many people, only the Nazis offered a promising non-Marxist solution to a crisis of this scale.

The polarization of Saxon society into those who aimed at a socialist society and those who favoured a nationalist, authoritarian society, came to a head in the final years of the Republic. In this situation, the Nazis offered something unique: the creation of a *Volksgemeinschaft* to overcome the divisions within society. What was unique was that they offered to unite all groups and classes in German society, including left and right. They offered hope and a way out of the crisis. A crucial precondition for the success of this vision was that they were not linked with the traditional parties and the system which seemed to have failed. The Nazis' appeal centred around extreme nationalism. Both, a unified *Volk* and a strong, authoritarian nation attracted people from all sectors of Saxon society. It naturally appealed to the conservative/anti-democratic groups. In addition, it offered a *Heimat* to those who were uprooted, unorganised and not affiliated to organisations or parties. Most Germans, including the working classes, were not organised in political parties or their affiliated organisations. Finally, a considerable part of the working classes began to support the Nazis when they were not firmly embedded in a working-class milieu, and their traditional parties did not respond to these deep

rooted nationalist desires for a *Volksgemeinschaft* and a strong nation which came out into the open during the crisis. While the Marxist parties championed 'internationalism' and 'class struggle', the Nazis promoted strong nationalism and 'class unity' of left and right.

From the late 1920s onwards, Saxony's democratic system gradually disintegrated and a power vacuum developed both at the centre and at the periphery.<sup>1246</sup> The only solution to the political polarization was a 'neutral' cabinet of civil servants which governed the state from May 1930. Increasingly more members of the state administration, judiciary and the police drifted to the anti-democratic right and pursued a line sympathetic to the NSDAP. However, although Saxony's democratic system crumbled, it did not fall. The final 'take over' by the Nazis was the result of events which took place outside Saxony. Only the 'seizure of power' at the national level after the March 1933 elections catapulted the Nazis into power in Saxony.

Until the end, the Nazis faced several serious limitations in Saxony. Open sympathy for the NSDAP was not all-embracing in any group of Saxon society, not even in middle or upper-class circles. The relationship between an important part of the traditional elites, e.g. Schick's government and several leaders of the VSI and LK, and the Nazis, remained lukewarm. The Nazis also faced limits in mobilizing mass support among the working class outside south-western Saxony. Furthermore, the elections in November 1932 showed two

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<sup>1246</sup> For a model of the character of the sequential breakdown of the Weimar Republic or other democratic systems see Bracher, *Auflösung*; and J. J. Linz 'The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown, and Reequilibration', in J. J. Linz and A. Stepan (eds.), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore, London, 1978), pp. 3-124.

things: First, the NSDAP's electorate depended on the crisis and had already passed its peak. Secondly, the great majority of the population was extremely sceptical about the Nazis' ability to do a better job in local councils than the traditional parties. Furthermore, there continued an 'unhealthy' imbalance between the increase of the NSDAP's electorate and the Nazis' organisational ability. The Nazis' electorate grew faster than their propaganda output, and much faster than their ability to attract new members (see Table 7 on page 109). Although the Nazis became the strongest party in Saxony in the final years of the Republic, they were unable to mobilize the majority of the population to topple the democratic system in Saxony or the *Reich*<sup>1247</sup>, and they did not gain control of the state or society before March 1933.

More than anything else, the investigation shows how complex the relationship between National Socialism and German society was and how difficult it is to make generalizations about this phenomenon. The diversity among the individual classes makes any discussion very complicated. It is hard to find a common link between a female cottage worker who produces gloves in a village in the Erzgebirge and a typesetter at a publishing company in Leipzig (working classes), or a butcher and a journalist (middle classes). Moreover, each village, town or region in Saxony produced a different picture. Each of them exemplified a different emphasis on the various criteria employed to explain the strength or weakness of the local NSDAP.

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<sup>1247</sup> Several NSDAP/KPD referendums to dissolve the state parliament failed miserably, and the Nazi were unable to mobilize the majority of the Saxon electorate in any elections before the *Machtergreifung*.

## Glossary and Abbreviations

ADGB	<i>Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</i> (socialist federation of trade unions).
AH.	<i>Amtshauptmannschaft</i> (administrative unit in Saxony).
ASPD	<i>Alte Sozialdemokratische Partei</i> (old SPD).
BA	Bundesarchiv Koblenz.
BA DH	Bundesarchiv, Zwischenstelle, Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten.
BDC	Berlin Document Centre.
ChVSt	<i>Chemnitzer Volksstimme</i> .
CSVD	<i>Christlich-sozialer Volksdienst</i> .
DDP	<i>Deutsche Demokratische Partei</i> (German Democratic Party).
Deutscher Tag	Nationalist festival (literally 'German day').
DHV	<i>Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfenverband</i> (Conservative White-Collar Union).
DNVP	<i>Deutschnationale Volkspartei</i> (German National People's Party).
DsP	<i>Deutschsozialistische Partei</i> (German Socialist Party).
DtsP	<i>Deutschsoziale Partei</i> (German Social Party).
DVFP	<i>Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei</i> (German Völkisch Freedom Party).
DVP	<i>Deutsche Volkspartei</i> (German People's Party).
DVSTB	<i>Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund</i> .
DVZ	<i>Dresdner Volkszeitung</i> .
EK	Erich Kunz (personal files in BA DH).
FK	<i>Der Freiheitskampf</i> (official Nazi newspaper of Gau Saxony. First published on 1 August 1930).
Gau	NSDAP's largest regional administrative unit.
Gauleiter	Regional leader of the NSDAP.
GDJB	<i>Großdeutscher Jugendbewegung</i> (Greater German Youth Movement).
Heimat	Home; home country.
HJ	<i>Hitlerjugend</i> (Hitler Youth).
JbDSd	<i>Jahrbuch der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie</i> (year-book of SPD).
KH.	<i>Kreishauptmannschaft</i> (largest administrative unit in Saxony).
KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> (German Communist Party).

LK	<i>Landwirtschaftskammer</i> (Agricultural Chamber).
LNN	<i>Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten</i> .
LVZ	<i>Leipziger Volkszeitung</i> .
LW	<i>Landtagswahlen</i> (state elections).
<i>Machtergreifung</i>	Term used to describe the Nazis' 'seizure of power' after March 1933.
MdI	<i>Ministerium des Innern</i> (Ministry of the Interior).
NKfS	<i>Nationaler Klub für Sachsen</i> (National Club of Saxony).
NSBO	<i>Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation</i> (National Socialist Factory Cell Organisation).
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> (National Socialist German Workers' Party).
NSF	<i>Nationalsozialistische Frauen</i> (National Socialist Women).
NSFB	<i>Nationalsozialistische Freiheitsbewegung</i> (National Socialist Freedom Movement).
NSfS	<i>Der Nationale Sozialist für Sachsen</i> (official Nazi newspaper for Saxony between the end of 1926 [in print since March 1926] and December 1928. Published by Straßer's 'Kampf-Verlag' in Berlin. Predecessor of the <i>SB</i> ).
NSLB	<i>Nationalsozialistischer Lehrer-Bund</i> (National Socialist Teachers' Union).
PP	<i>Polizeipräsidium</i> (police headquarters).
<i>Proletarische Hundertschaften</i>	Workers contingents and normally unarmed.
<i>Putsch</i>	Violent uprising.
<i>Reich</i>	Empire (term widely used to describe the German nation between 1871 and 1945).
<i>Reichswehr</i>	German army.
RW	<i>Reichstagswahlen</i> (elections to the German parliament).
SA	<i>Sturmabteilung</i> (Storm-troopers).
SäStKa	<i>Sächsische Staatskanzlei</i> (Saxon state chancellery).
SB	<i>Der Sächsische Beobachter</i> (successor of the <i>NSfS</i> and official NSDAP newspaper in Saxony between January 1929 and June 1930. Published by Straßer's 'Kampf-Verlag').
SI	<i>Sächsische Industrie</i> (weekly newspaper of VSI).
SISch	<i>Sammlung Schumacher</i> (BA).

SLV	<i>Sächsisches Landvolk</i> (Saxon Peasant Party; affiliated with the DNVP).
SLZ	<i>Sächsische Landwirtschaftliche Zeitschrift</i> (Saxon agricultural newspaper).
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (Social Democratic Party of Germany).
SS	<i>Schutzstaffeln</i> (elite Nazi organisation).
STAD	Staatsarchiv Dresden.
Stahlhelm	Nationalist ex-servicemen's organization.
STA L	Staatsarchiv Leipzig.
StA L	Stadtarchiv Leipzig.
StDR	<i>Statistik des Deutschen Reichs</i> .
StJbDR	<i>Statistisches Jahrbuch des Deutschen Reichs</i> .
StJbSa	<i>Statistisches Jahrbuch für den Freistaat Sachsen</i> .
SVB	<i>Sächsisches Volksblatt</i> (Zwickau).
Vaterland	Fatherland; one's native country.
VB	<i>Völkischer Beobachter</i> (official NSDAP newspaper).
VdSL	<i>Verhandlungen des Sächsischen Landtages</i> (minutes of the Saxon state parliament).
VNR	<i>Volksnationale Reichsvereinigung</i> (party; former Jungdo).
völkisch	racial-nationalist.
Volk	People; nation.
Volksge- meinschaft	People's Community.
VSB	<i>Völkisch-sozialer Block</i> .
VSI	<i>Verband Sächsischer Industrieller</i> (organisation of the Saxon industrialists').
WP	<i>Wirtschaftspartei</i> (Business Party).
Wp	<i>Wahlperiode</i> (time between elections).
ZAS	<i>Zeitungsausschnittsammlung</i> (newspaper clippings collection).
ZPA	Institut für Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung Berlin (former 'Zentrales Parteiarchiv der SED').
ZSäStLA	<i>Zeitschrift des Sächsischen Statistischen Landesamtes</i> .

## Appendices

**Appendix 1:** Conditions laid down by the NSDAP for tolerating the Bürger government in early July 1929 (read out by Cuno Meyer before the second vote for the president in the parliament in Saxony on 4.7.1929):

1. Daß die sächsische Regierung sich im Reichsrat gegen alle Verträge, insbesondere gegen das Pariser Abkommen und alle daraus resultierenden Maßnahmen einsetzt, durch die das deutsche Volk in weitere politische und wirtschaftliche Abhängigkeit vom internationalen Bank- und Börsenkapitalismus kommt.
2. Daß die sächsische Regierung zur Durchführung von Sparmaßnahmen bereit ist, und zwar durch Vereinfachung des behördlichen Verwaltungsapparates, insbesondere durch Einziehung der sächsischen Gesandtschaften in Berlin und München, und weiter eine Herabsetzung der Gehälter und Streichung der Pensionen für nicht aus dem Berufsbeamtentum hervorgegangene Minister veranlaßt.
3. Daß sich die sächsische Regierung zur Ausarbeitung eines ausreichenden und umfassenden Arbeitsprogrammes bereiterklärt, das geeignet ist, die Erwerbslosigkeit zu beheben und die sächsische Industrie neu zu beleben und bei Vergebung von Staatsaufträgen die sächsische Industrie in erster Linie zu berücksichtigen.
4. Daß sich die sächsische Regierung bereit erklärt, die Mietzinssteuer restlos dem Wohnungsbau zuzuführen und darüber hinaus noch Mittel bereitzustellen, mit deren Hilfe eine Beseitigung der Wohnungsnot erreicht wird.
5. Daß die sächsische Regierung billige Staatskredite für die Landwirtschaft bereitstellt.
6. Daß die sächsische Regierung bereit ist, sich aktiv für den Schutz des Mittelstandes im Handwerk, Handel und Gewerbe einzusetzen und insbesondere die Beseitigung der steuerlichen Vergünstigungen der Konsumvereine und der Sonderbesteuerung der Warenhäuser sorgt.

Weiter fordern wir:

Das Innenministerium und Kultusministerium darf nicht mit einem Demokraten besetzt werden, weil wir sonst nicht die Gewähr haben, daß unsere Bewegung gleichgeachtet wird wie jede andere Partei oder Bewegung. Ein demokratischer Innenminister gibt uns nicht die Gewähr, daß wir mit gleichem Maß gemessen werden, weil eben hinter der demokratischen Partei das jüdische Großkapital steht.



Daß ist unsere Grundbedingung.

Ich erinnere dabei an das Verbot des Wiking, das Redeverbot Adolf Hitlers, der in Plauen und Zwickau gesprochen hatte, und nicht einmal ein Zwischenruf war hierbei erfolgt.

Wir Nationalsozialisten wollen keinen Ministerposten. Sollten Sie aber der Meinung sein, daß wir uns von der Verantwortung drücken wollen, so irren Sie sich. Wenn sie es wünschen, daß wir mitregieren, so kommt für uns nur das Innenministerium in Frage. Und zwar werden wir einen Fachmann stellen, der es wirklich versteht, und nicht auf Grund seines Parteibuches sich einbildet, Minister spielen zu können. (Wir hätten Pg. Dr. Frick präsentiert.)

Source: 'Unsere Politik im Landtag' (M. v. Killinger), *SB*, Nr. 28, 14.7.1929.

## Appendix 2: Mücke's letter to SPD and KPD from 29 June 1929:

An die

Herren Vorsitzenden der sozialdemokratischen und kommunistischen  
Fraktion im sächsischen Landtage

Dresden, Landtag

Sehr geehrte Herren!

Die Entwicklung der innerpolitischen Ereignisse, sie sich an die Wahl des jetzigen Ministerpräsidenten geknüpft haben, veranlassen die Reichsleitung der N.S.D.A.P. in Ueberlegung einzutreten, ob die zukünftige Regierung überhaupt lebensfähig ist.

Ich darf mir daher erlauben, als Abgeordneter der 'Sektion Reichsleitung' der N.S.D.A.P. mit Ermächtigung und im Auftrage meiner Parteileitung an Sie heranzutreten mit der Frage, ob Sie geneigt sind, mit mir Verbindung aufzunehmen zur Klärung der Frage, ob eine Unterstützung einer von Ihren Parteien gebildeten sächsischen Regierung durch die nationalsozialistische Fraktion sich ermöglichen läßt.

Die Reichsleitung legt Wert auf die Klärung dieser Angelegenheit, um mit der Landtagsfraktion entsprechend in Verbindung treten zu können. Die Herren werden sich aus dem vorigen Landtage erinnern, daß dieselbe Frage schon einmal gespielt hat, und daß damals mir Zusicherung gemacht werden konnten, die uns ermöglicht haben würden, eine von Ihren Parteien gebildete Regierung zu unterstützen.

Mehr oder weniger dieselben Punkte würden ja auch heute zur Debatte stehen. Ich darf sie daher im Kernpunkte wiederholen. Damals stellte ich zur Bedingung in erster Linie die Vermeidung jedes Ausnahmegesetzes gegen meine Partei, Vermeidung jedes Verbotes oder Auflösung aus Gründen, die bei anderen Parteien unter gleichen Verhältnissen nicht zum Verbot oder zur Auflösung führten, Vermeidung aller Polizeischikanen usw. usw., Vermeidung einer Beschränkung der Aeußerung der Meinungsfreiheit.

Sollten die Herren geneigt sein, die angeregte Besprechung zu haben, so wäre ich für eine gefällige Benachrichtung, gegebenfalls fernmündlich (37 490), zu Dank verpflichtet.

Ich darf annehmen, daß ein völliges Schweigen auf mein Schreiben als Ablehnung aufzufassen ist und daß ich dann dementsprechend meiner Reichsleitung Bericht erstatten könnte.

Die nationalsozialistische Fraktion hat Kenntniss.

Ich darf ergebenst bitten, dieses Schreiben als vertraulich zu behandeln.

Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung

Ihr ergebenster

gez.: Hellmuth v. Mücke

Abgeordneter der "Sektion Reichsleitung" Der N.S.D.A.P.

Source: *Sächsisches Volksblatt*, Nr. 153, 4.7.1929.

### **Appendix 3: Conditions laid down by the NSDAP for tolerating the Schieck government in February 1930:**

Die NSDAP legt keinen Wert darauf, daß in Sachsen, das im Mai 1929 antimarxistisch gewählt hat, eine große Koalition unter Einschluß der Marxisten gebildet wird.

Mit der Person des Präsidenten des Staatsrechnungshofes Herrn Schieck als Ministerpräsidenten sind wir im allgemeinen einverstanden. Nach seiner bisherigen Tätigkeit glauben wir erwarten zu können, daß er gewillt ist, im sächsischen Regierungs- und Verwaltungsapparat wirklich saubere Verhältnisse zu schaffen.

Wir sind bereit, unter folgenden Bedingungen in Verhandlungen zur Bildung einer Regierung unter Führung des Herrn Präsidenten Schieck einzutreten:

1. Kein Marxist einschließlich Altsozialisten in der Sächsischen Regierung.
2. Bei allen entscheidenden politischen Fragen, bei Berufung von Ministerien, höheren Regierungsbeamten usw. ist der interfraktionelle Ausschuß einzuberufen. Die Regierung hat die die Regierung stützenden Parteien über die beabsichtigten wichtigsten Maßnahmen zu unterrichten.
3. Die sächsische Regierung hat sich im Reichsrat gegen alle Verträge, durch die das deutsche Volk in weitere politische und wirtschaftliche Abhängigkeit vom internationalen Bank- und Börsenkapitalismus kommt, einzusetzen.
4. Durchführung von Sparmaßnahmen, Vereinfachung des behördlichen Verwaltungsapparates, Einziehung der Sächsischen Gesandtschaft in Berlin, Herabsetzung der Gehälter und Streichung der Pensionen für nicht aus dem Berufsbeamtentum hervorgegangene Minister.
5. Es ist ein ausreichendes und umfassendes Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogramm auszuarbeiten, das geeignet ist, die Erwerbslosigkeit zu beheben und die sächsische Industrie in erster Linie zu berücksichtigen. Die Mietzinssteuer ist restlos dem Wohnungsbau zuzuführen und darüber hinaus noch Mittel bereit zu stellen, mit deren Hilfe eine Beseitigung der Wohnungsnot erreicht wird.
6. Der Landwirtschaft sind billige Staatskredite bereitzustellen.
7. Schutz des Mittelstandes in Handwerk, Handel und Gewerbe, Beseitigung der steuerlichen Vergünstigung der Konsumvereine sowie Sonderbesteuerung der Warenhäuser.

Wir betonen, daß eine Besetzung eines Ministeriums durch die NSDAP unter den jetzigen Verhältnissen nicht in Frage kommt. Wir erwarten aber, daß unseren Wünschen bei Besetzung der einzelnen Ministerien Rechnung getragen wird.

Mit deutschem Gruß! Gez. v. Killinger

Source: SB, 1/2.3.1930.

**Appendix 4: Declaration of the NSDAP before the state election in Saxony on 22 June 1930:**

Vom Sinn des 22. Juni: ... Die sächsische Regierung hat die Erwartungen des sächsischen Volkes enttäuscht ... (als Gegensatz dazu) Thüringen: führt Schulgebete wieder ein, hat Verordnungen gegen kulturzerstörende Nigger'kultur', protestiert gegen Young, hat keine marxistischen Bonzen als Beamte, hat aktive Maßnahmen gegen katastrophale Reichspolitik, kuschelt nicht vor der marxistisch verseuchten Reichsregierung ... Das Bestreben eines jeden wahrhaften Sachsen müßte daher sein, dafür zu sorgen, daß Sachsen als 2. deutscher 'Frei'-Staat gleich Thüringen ein Bollwerk gegen Bolschewismus und Sklaverei wird. Jeder Sachse müßte dafür sorgen, daß auch in Sachsen wie in Thüringen wahre Volkspolitik getrieben wird. Dann wird die Sklaverei nur noch kurze Zeit dauern wenn so ein Land nach dem anderen erobert würde ... Zwar, das bekennen wir Nationalsozialisten, der Parlamentarismus vermag die deutsche Schicksalsfrage nicht endgültig zu lösen. Aber es ist ein Weg offen zur Macht, zur Freiheit und Brot. Wir Nationalsozialisten werden das durchführen, was die Interessen aller schaffenden deutschen Volksgenossen erfordert, das steht fest! Wir lehnen es aber auch im Gegensatz zu manchen anderen Parteien und Interessengruppen ab, unsinnige Wahlversprechungen aufzustellen. Das gesamte noch selbständig denkende deutsche Volk weiß, was wir wollen, und das genügt. Nämlich:

Kampf

für Freiheit und Brot, gegen Marxismus und Kapitalismus  
für Beseitigung der Arbeitslosigkeit, der Wohnungsnot und der Wirtschaftskrise,

gegen Youngversklavung und Erfüllungspolitik, für Wahrheit, einen sauberen Volksstaat und Christentum,

gegen Lüge, Korruption und Antichristentum,

für ein starkes, einiges, deutsches Volk aller Berufe,

gegen Parteiunwesen, Zersplitterung und ihre Folgen,

für deutsche Kultur und deutschen Glauben,

gegen Bolschewismus und Untergang!

Seid ihr, deutsche Volksgenossen, mit uns Nationalsozialisten in diesen Forderungen einig, dann zieht auch die Folgerungen aus eurer Besinnung. Wenn ihr mit den jetzigen Zuständen nicht mehr zufrieden seid, dann wählt mit uns Liste 7.

Source: SB, Nr. 95, 17.6.1930.

**Appendix 5: KPD report about the political situation in Saxony after the Nazi *Machtergreifung* (written on 26 November 1933):**

... Nach den ersten Erschütterungen der Organisationseinheiten nach dem März, ist die Sammlung der Mitglieder und der Aufbau der Organisation bezirklich wie örtlich im Unterbezirk Leipzig am besten gelungen ... 25 Funktionäre mit finanziellen Zuschüssen waren im Bezirk tätig. Bis Juli kam eine gedruckte Zeitung heraus ... Im Oktober wurden für Leipzig-Stadt allein in 3 Tagen 17 Zellenversammlungen festgelegt ... RH hat von ihren Organisations Einheiten in Leipzig über 10000 Handzettel und Streuzettel ... herausgegeben ... Im Unterbezirk Leipzig befanden sich 2 Konzentrationslager: Sachsenburg für 'Besserungsfähige' (keine strengen Kontrollen); Lager Kolditz ('Schwerbesserungsfähige') ... Die NS-Presse berichtete über 20000 Häftlinge in den Konzentrationalagern ... Die SPD im Bezirk: Von einer Arbeit der SPD im Bezirke war nichts zu verspüren ... Die Arbeitsmitglieder der SPD sind sehr gleichgültig und kampfscheu, aber uns und unserer Arbeit nicht so feindlich, wie vor der Machtübernahme der Nazis. Aus den Betrieben sind durch die Nazis nicht nur die letzten Kommunisten, sondern auch alle SPD-Arbeiter entlassen worden. Wenn früher in den städtischen Betrieben Gas-Wasser-Elektrizitätswerke, Straßenbahn, Schlachthöfe usw. Domänen der SPD waren, so haben sich jetzt die Nazis dort eingenistet ... (SPD-Arbeiter die hinausgeworfen wurden) haben sich trotz des Entzuges ihrer Existenzgrundlagen durch die Nazis noch nicht revolutionär eingestellt. Der ältere, der rückständigere Teil derselben, glaubt noch an ein 'Abwirtschaften Hitlers'. Ein großer Teil jüngerer SPD-Arbeiter kam zur Partei. In Leipzig-Süd, dem Stadtteil 11, wurden bei einem Mitgliederstand der Partei von 180 - 40 frühere SPD-Arbeiter nach dem März neu in unsere Partei aufgenommen ... arbeiten aktiv mit ... Stadtteil gibt 14-tägig eine gute Zeitung in 200 Exemplaren heraus.. Nazi und SA: Die Unzufriedenheit der Naziwähler nahm besonders unter den kleinbürgerlichen Anhang und proletarischen Elementen zu ... auf dem Lande dieselben Erscheinungen ... Merkmale: Jetzt nur auf jedem 15-20 Fahrrad Hakenkreuzwimpel, nicht mehr viele Nazifahnen von Häusern. In der SA ist fast dauernd Zersetzung. Im KZ in Kolditz waren zeitweilig 1/6 der Häftlinge SA-Leute ... Arbeit auf dem Dorf wegen organisatorischen Schwäche noch zurück ...

Source: ZPA, I 3/8-10/168.

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- SPD, KPD (ZPA 9).
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#### PDS Archiv Leipzig:

- autobiographies of former SPD and KPD activists ('*Bestand Erinnerungen*').



Staatsarchiv Dresden:

- Ministerium des Innern: among other things, weekly or monthly police reports about the political and economic situation in Saxony between 1919 and 1931, and files about the NSDAP between 1929 and 1933. There are, however, many gaps due to war losses.
- Amtshauptmannschaften*: among other things, reports about the political and economic situation, public meetings, and election reports from the various AH.s in the KH.s Chemnitz and Zwickau. There are, however, substantial gaps due to war losses.
- Zeitungsausschnittsammlung* (large collection of newspaper clippings from 1919 to 1945): among other things, reports about election campaigns, Saxon governments, Saxon towns, political parties and organisations, and the economy.
- Sächsische Staatskanzlei: among other things, confidential reports about the political and economic situation between 1923 and 1930. There are, however, substantial gaps due to war losses.
- newspapers from Saxony.

Staatsarchiv Leipzig:

- reports from police headquarters (PP-V): among other things, reports about the activity of political parties in Leipzig.
- reports from police headquarters (PP-St): documents which were stored in the 'Zentrales Parteiarchiv Berlin' and returned to Leipzig in 1990.
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